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# THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

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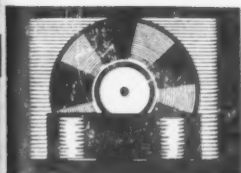
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TECHNICAL AND  
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# THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

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November, 1940

## Editorial Notes

It becomes increasingly evident from our correspondence and personal contact with record buyers that they are as much interested in up-to-date recordings as they are in first rate performances. In the recent questionnaire mailed out to all our subscribers, one of the questions we asked was: "In buying records what do you consider primarily—technical superiority or perfection of performance?" Of the 46 per cent of readers who have complied with our request to fill in and return the questionnaire, we find that 60 per cent favor perfection of performance, 13 per cent favor superiority of recording, and 24 per cent insist upon both. The returns do not dovetail with our more personal advices from readers and buyers of records. The greater percentage of these would seem to be for both, with a decided leaning towards superiority of recording. Perhaps we might take the early recordings made by Toscanini as an example; most record buyers tell us that although they recognize the fine quality of his readings in them, they much prefer a more modern recording of the same work even if the reading is not up to the standard set by Toscanini. This is understandable because recording has advanced tremendously since 1929 and 1930, when Toscanini made such works as the Haydn *Clock* and the Mozart *Haffner* symphonies. In those days, recording was by and large two-dimensional—that is, the dynamics were either loud or half-loud; there were no real fortissimi or pianissimi. In 1935 recording altered with the adoption of a new microphone technique, and the resulting gamut of dynamics was at first far too wide for satisfactory reproduction in the home. Such sets as Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and the Toscanini performance of Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* are products of this new technique. After some unsatisfactory preliminary work, the recording engineers acquired a wide dynamic range without making it difficult for the listener to enjoy pianissimi

(Continued on page 84)

# Bach's Musical Offering

Hans T. David

*Ever since the recording of Bach's Art of the Fugue was released, musical connoisseurs have been awaiting one of the composer's Musical Offering to place beside it on the record shelf. Together with the former work, the Musical Offering is a summation of the contrapuntal art, and remains one of the greatest intellectual feats accomplished in all music. The release by Victor this month of a complete recording of this important work in Dr. David's adaptation (see review section) now makes it available to those who previously knew of it only by reputation. We are pleased to present Dr. David's scholarly notes about the history of this work. These notes, as well as a detailed study of each section of the music, will be found in the booklet accompanying the set.*

**I**N 1747, three years before his death, Bach undertook the last journey of his life. It was this journey which led to the composition of the *Musical Offering*.

Frederick II, later to be surnamed the Great, had mounted the throne of Prussia in 1740. He loved music, played the flute, and composed prolifically. Among the musicians of his chapel was Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, second son of Johann Sebastian Bach. Johann Sebastian, known as "old Bach", was famous as a player, a teacher, and a learned composer. The King wanted to meet and hear the esteemed father of his accompanist, and expressed his wish to Philipp Emanuel more and more urgently. Finally Johann Sebastian went to Potsdam, accompanied by Wilhelm Friedemann, his oldest son. Wilhelm Friedemann later told the story of this visit to Bach's first biographer, J. N. Forkel. The account was somewhat flowery but a contemporary newspaper report confirms it in its essential details.

The King used to have a concert every evening. On May 7, 1747, just as he was about to begin a flute solo, he was given the list of strangers who had arrived in town. He turned to the musicians assembled for the concert and said: "Gentlemen, old Bach has come." He laid aside the flute, ordered Bach to enter, and invited him to play.

At this time, the harpsichord, an instrument with one or two keyboards and sev-

eral registers using plucking quills to produce the sound, began to give way to a new type of keyboard instrument, the *pianoforte* with a hammer mechanism. King Frederick had taken a fancy to the pianofortes by Gottfried Silbermann, a famous Saxonian instrument maker. Bach, the King, and the musicians went from room to room, and Bach tried all the Silbermann pianofortes which the King had assembled.

Bach asked the King for a fugue theme. His Majesty's august Self (as the newspaper report words it) condescended to play a theme for the *Capellmeister* Bach, and Bach immediately extemporized a brilliant fugue, apparently in three parts, on the King's subject, to the satisfaction of His Majesty and the amazement of the others present.

The next day, Bach visited the new Royal opera house at Berlin and gave a concert on a Potsdam organ. The following evening the King asked Bach to play a six-part fugue on his subject. Bach excused himself, for not every theme lent itself to such improvisation in many voices. He improvised, instead, a six-part fugue on a theme of his own choice, but promised that he would work out the fugue and have it engraved on copper.

Bach subsequently wrote down the three-part fugue extemporized at Potsdam and composed the six-part fugue which he had refused to extemporize. Furthermore, he

*Canones diversi super Thema Regium*

*Canon Iar.*

*a 2 Violin: in Unisone.*

*3 a 2 per Matum contrarium*

*a 2. per Augmentationem, contraria dicta*

*5 a 2.*

*Siga canonica in Epitaphio*

Regis.

Facsimile of the First Page of the "Various Canons over the King's Theme" as it appears in the copy of "The Musical Offering" presented to Frederick the Great.  
(Courtesy of The Musical Quarterly, N. Y. C.)

*Notulis cerni.  
 this great  
 Fortuna  
 time alternat  
 stellar.*

used the King's subject in a sonata for flute, violin and thorough bass, added ten canons based on the "right Royal theme," and had the whole published as "Musical Offering" most humbly dedicated to his Royal Majesty in Prussia by Johann Sebastian Bach."

A first copy, with complimentary inscriptions, was dispatched to the King. He gave it to his sister, the Princess Anna Amalia, in whose splendid music library it has been preserved. The King forgot

about it, but many years later he spoke to an Austrian ambassador about Bach's visit, mentioning that Bach had improvised fugues in up to eight parts on his subject in his presence.

The *Musical Offering*, like most music publications of the period, was a collection of compositions that could be performed singly. It contained twelve one-movement numbers, in addition to the Sonata, which consisted of four movements. All numbers used the same theme and were set in the

same key (c minor). All were "polyphonic" compositions, i.e. compositions written for a definite number of instrumental voices. Thus the whole work displayed deliberate homogeneity.

Bach unified the sections of the *Musical Offering* by a strictly symmetric plan. He began with the three-part fugue and ended up with the six-part fugue. He devised the Sonata, the most extended of the compositions, in such a manner that it formed the natural center of the structure. He divided the canons into two contrasting groups of five numbers each. The first canon group was placed between the opening fugue and the Sonata, the second canon group between the Sonata and the concluding fugue. Manifold relations connected the two fugues, and similarly the two canon groups.

The forms used in the *Musical Offering* were common in chamber music, or music for a small ensemble of solo instruments. As a publication of chamber music, the work rounded out the survey of instrumental forms which had been previously published by Bach. To be sure, it owed its existence to a particular event in Bach's life, but it was so thoroughly worked out according to a comprehensive plan and idea that hardly more than the Royal theme points back to its specific origin.

Bach himself was satisfied with his creation and its unity. He remarked in the dedication that his intention and pledge to work out the Royal theme more thoroughly had been fulfilled to the best of his ability. He further accompanied the work with an acrostic in which he called the complete series of movements a *ricercar*. The *ricercar* sometimes consisted of several sections which presented a common subject in various ways, but these sections were always performed together as one piece. Bach's use of the word, therefore, indicates that he felt deeply the coherence and continuity accomplished in the *Musical Offering* and that he actually considered the work as a whole.

Unfortunately a haze of misunderstanding has obscured the true importance of the *Musical Offering*. The engraver of the 1747 edition lived so far from Leipzig that Bach could not supervise the engraving or even read proofs. The engraver changed the

sequence of movements in order to save space. This, as well as inconsistencies within the old edition, was taken to mean that Bach had composed the work without definite plan or idea and had sent it off in sections just the parts came to his mind. Although this deduction was a blunder, the tale of the piecemeal production of the work has been uncritically retold again and again.

The *Musical Offering* constituted Bach's last contribution to chamber music and the only one he ever published. Carefully laid out and minutely executed, it became one of the most representative creations of his last period. This period was marked by a marked predilection for strict forms, and some of these have found their way into the *Musical Offering*. But Bach, at that time, used the most intricate counterpoint and solved the most difficult problems of composition with such ease that he seems nowhere restrained by the exigencies of his devices. However interesting the *Musical Offering* may be to the student of counterpoint and composition, the work is full of beauty and expression—a masterpiece that can be fully enjoyed by those who have no technical knowledge.

Bach conceived the *Musical Offering* as an instrumental work, but, following a custom of the time, he left the actual choice of instruments largely to the performer.

The Sonata was published in parts for certain specified instruments (originally entitled *Traversa, Violino and Continuo*).

In the canons, Bach gave only two hints concerning instrumentation. They lead to the conclusion that Bach intended the canons to be played by an ensemble of instruments.

The fugues, although inserted in a work of chamber music, were not exclusively meant for a performance with several instruments. The three-part fugue was improvised on a keyboard instrument and published in keyboard notation. The six-part fugue was so composed that it could be played on a keyboard instrument without a sounding pedal. But it was published in score, which was a traditional means of indicating that a composition could be executed by an ensemble of instruments as well as on a keyboard instru-



ment. Thus at least the concluding fugue was intended for double usage.

The present instrumentation observes Bach's instructions. The opening fugue is played on a keyboard instrument, the other movements by an ensemble of solo instruments. The Sonata and the opening canon of the second group are presented by the instruments specified by Bach. The concluding canon of the second group is executed, for reasons of balance, by the same instruments as the opening canon of that group.

The remaining canons of the second group are performed on string instruments.

The canons of the first group and the six-part fugue employ a combination of strings and double-reed instruments, in order to set the intricate contrapuntal structure into relief. All instruments used correspond to those found in Bach's orchestra, the English horn taking the place of the obsolete *oboe da caccia*.

This instrumentation does not go beyond the specification of instruments for those movements in which Bach purposely left the choice of instruments to the performer. It is neither an arrangement nor a transcription. It has been called an adaptation in order to emphasize its modesty of intention and scholarly strictness of execution.

## Nameless Artists on Records

A. J. Franck

THE issuance of recordings in the past two years in which the performers' identities are not revealed, and the recent discussions of "mood music", although described by their sponsors and writers as innovations, are no more than a return to the paths of Thomas A. Edison. To one who has watched the record industry for nearly four decades, these are as the turning of a wheel; slowly but surely a certain spoke returns to the position where it was seen first.

"Mood music" was the subject of a pamphlet that emanated from Orange, N. J., many years ago. It purported to be the result of a scientific (?) survey of the effect of certain musical selections upon the nervous and emotional states of a considerable number of people. The pamphlet prescribed the *Meistersinger Preislied* as a sedative. Perhaps this effect was obtained from the very early "5-ply" Edison discs, but when one remembers the very high scratch level of those wartime Edison "Re-creations", one wonders whether the alleged sedative effect may not have been a sort of self-hypnosis induced by the soothing words of the sponsors. This writer is inclined to believe that his own nervous

distress of the early twenties was materially enhanced by almost daily hearings of the Edison surface noise—from the *Preislied* record, too!—in addition to the squeals and crashes from his primitive radios and audio amplifiers. Maybe there is something in "mood music", but the proof will have to be really scientific and not philosophic. Let us do it with sphygmomanometers, electrocardiographs, orsat apparatus and the paraphernalia of metabolism testing, with pyrometers used for the jazz devotee.

The experiment—recently undertaken by the National Committee for Music Appreciation, newspapers, and a couple of minor record companies—of selling merely the music and dismissing the artist's identity as an inconsequential matter, prompts reflections about artistic anonymity, pseudonymity, and downright faking. To take the last first, the final decade of the 19th century saw the issuance of innumerable cylinder recordings that purported to reproduce the voices of notables and that actually represented the voices of mere studio hacks. The writer, a few years ago, found in an upstate attic a white wax cylinder of what was apparently the voice of the late William Jennings Bryan, de-

livering his famed and prophetic *Cross of Gold* speech. The precious find was taken to a leading sound studio and played in the presence of Frank L. Capps, one-time president of the historic U. S. Phonograph Co. Mr. Capps, hale and hearty in his seventies, laughed gaily as he heard the cylinder, and informed the expectant gathering that the voice was not that of the Peerless Commoner but of the late Len Spencer. It seems that Len had doubled for about every person known to fame from Julius Caesar to Jenny Lind!

The department of pseudonymity need be touched upon only lightly. Almost everyone knows of instances of artists making recordings under aliases. Emilio de Gogorza's performances for Victor as Carlos Francisco at the same time he was making red seals with his own name on them is a well known instance. Arthur Middleton, the great bass-baritone, used, besides his own name, the pseudonyms Edward Allen and Eduard Mittelstadt on Edison records. Gladys Rice, it is said, used at least five aliases; and the record fans of twenty-odd years back considered her a better singer under one of those aliases than under her own name. We often hear it said that the Victor Symphony is the Philadelphia Orchestra, except that the labels are black.

Pseudonymity in another guise is found in the main catalogue of the Royale and Varsity records issued by the present-day U. S. Record Corporation. Some of the orchestral recordings were originally brilliant ones made by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra back in 1928 and 1929, under the capable direction of Erich Kleiber. Their identity today, however, is cloaked in a trade name generality. Joel Shaw's snappy dance recordings, originally issued by the Plaza Music Co. as Crown records, have been resurrected for the Varsity list without Shaw's name. If the object was to conceal the age of any of these discs, the procedure is understandable; but, while the recordings are still remarkably good in the original pressings, the repressings unfortunately are far from the originals, their noisy surfaces suggesting that they were simply dubbed from old records. Such a recording as Berlioz' *Benvenuto Cellini Overture*, for example, in the original

Czechoslovak Ultraphone labels, which the writer owns, is an unusually fine recording, judged even by today's standards; but the Royale pressing is inferior. The recording was pre-Hitler Telefunken. Pseudonymity is really the next thing to anonymity, is it not?

Anonymity, for the artist, is not a new thing either. Many of the early Edison discs contained only the name of the selection, the composer's name and the record number. One of the best of these was a record on which a tenor sang Schubert's beloved *Ständchen*. Edison salespeople had been trained to say that the name, if there was one, on the label meant little (unless, of course, it was an Edison record). Their point was that records presented nothing more than the ghost of a famous voice, and a deformed ghost at that. The writer once told a Y.M.C.A. secretary who had haughtily boasted of having "only red seal records" in his collection that red is a pretty color but that you can't play the labels. Edison's sales argument was that what you got on the Edison record was the living *music*; what did it matter whose name was placed on the label if the resulting reproduction was only an effigy? The emphasis was on the music, and that is what the issuers of records by anonymous artists are saying after a quarter-century.

[*Editor's Note*] Thus history repeats itself. There is, however, an added factor in the anonymity of the opera and symphony sets that was not present in Edison's time. Take the case of the opera sets: it is contended that many of the singers are under contract to large companies, and are accordingly not allowed to appear under different auspices. This contention would tend to make the buyer believe that he might be acquiring a recording by a Flagstad, a Tibbett, or a Pinza. But some of the artists' names have appeared in local papers and several are identifiable by their recordings, so that the above implication is not borne out by the facts. None of the singers whose names we have seen mentioned in connection with those sets is associated, so far as we know, with the major phonograph companies. We are given to understand that Carmen is sung by Joan Peebles, Jose by Raoul Jobin, and Escamillo by Leonard Warren; that Rha-



dames is sung by Arthur Carron, and Pinkerton by Armand Tokatyan. Who the sopranos are in *Aida*, *Faust* and *Madame Butterfly* we cannot say; but we can say that the lady in the latter set is heard to advantage. We may not be right in our identification of the singers, but we are assured that those artists are engaged in making the records. Other singers employed are George Cehanovsky (baritone) and Norman Cordon (bass). The orchestra is said to be composed of members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, and the conductor to be Wilfred Pelletier for all except the German operas; in the latter we understand Hans Wilhelm Steinberg officiates.

The sets we have heard are *Carmen*, *Faust*, *Aida*, and *Madame Butterfly*. The first and last of these have their attractions, not the least of which is the fine singing of the tenor. The singers who take the leading roles in these two sets are on the whole good vocalists, with the exception of Escamillo in the *Carmen* album. Both *Faust* and *Aida*, in our estimation, are completely disappointing, not only as regards singers but as regards the selections chosen.

The National Committee for Music Appreciation, which is sponsoring the new opera sets, is a non-profit organization; that is, the funds left after paying all expenses of making and handling the discs, the salaries of the President, John Erskine, and other officials, are to be given to the Metropolitan Opera Guild.

As to the quality of the recordings themselves: some are good and worth the money and some are very poor; none are up to the quality of recent recordings issued by the recording companies. Insofar as they may be strong aids toward the development of music appreciation they should be endorsed; but judged on their own merits as recordings and interpretations, they are on the whole inferior to sets that can be obtained through regular channels. Despite the fact that such a reputable newspaper as The New York Times says that the recordings "are well made and the ensembles are balanced in tone", such is not the case. In the *Carmen* set, for example, the choruses are so far forward that they almost bark at us, and the illusion created in the final scene is

quite the opposite of what Bizet intended. The recordings are frequently over-amplified and the amplification is uneven from one disc-side to the other. And in all of the sets that we have heard, the recording gives an impression of having been made in a large, empty auditorium.

It is disappointing to find some newspaper critics praising recordings like these unconditionally. While the price of the regular sets is quite just (the De Luxe are definitely not worth the extra money to our way of thinking), we believe, because we have had so many inquiries from readers, that many people would appreciate the facts of the case. The only true statement of these that we have seen in print to date was given by *Time* in its October 14th issue (page 108). *Time* brought out that "like the earlier symphonic discs [which have been sponsored by newspapers for the past year and a half], the operatic records are . . . performed without benefit of rehearsals . . ." and, further, that "they are not quite so wonderful as the Committee's advertisements suggest". *Time* further gives us the very interesting information that the New York Better Business Bureau made the Committee moderate its claims. The Better Business Bureaus in more than one city, we are given to understand, found it necessary to curtail the activities and extravagant claims of the sponsors of the symphonic recordings. Despite the fact that all these recordings may well help to increase music appreciation in this country, the discriminating music lover will want discs by artists whom he knows and admires, and performances that he has reason to believe are well rehearsed and recorded. It is not impossible that this anonymous business may grow into something that will defeat the very purpose for which the records were issued.

In presenting performances that are in some cases less than first-rate, the sponsors may be incurring the risk of alienating rather than attracting new recruits to the ranks of operatic audiences. We are inclined to believe that where the music has to stand on its own feet and undergo the severe test of constant repetition, unaided by the attractions of lighting, scenic effects, and so on, only the most competent kind of singing and playing will have the effect desired by the Committee.

## Some Recommended Symphonies

EVERY month we receive and answer a large quantity of letters from readers inquiring what we consider the best versions of various works. Since we feel that our remarks about symphony recordings to several readers this past month may prove of interest to others, we present here our comments on various symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert and Tchaikowsky.

*First Symphony* (Beethoven)—The Toscanini performance is the best in our estimation. We recommend it unreservedly.

*Second Symphony* (Beethoven) — There have been three excellent recordings of this work issued in the last two years. Our preference goes to Beecham, who ideally sets forth the songful characteristics of this symphony. Koussevitzky enjoys better recording, but to us he dramatizes the music more than it warrants.

*Third Symphony* (Beethoven) — Although we are by no means sold on the Koussevitzky reading as pure Beethoven, we like it best of existent sets. It is rumored that a Toscanini recording will be brought out in the near future; so we recommend that readers wait before deciding on this work.

*Fifth Symphony* (Beethoven)—Despite the superb performance of Toscanini, we prefer the Furtwaengler set for its richer and more spacious recording. For those interested we understand that the royalties accruing from this set go to England, not to Germany.

*Seventh Symphony* (Beethoven) — The Toscanini version, despite some unorthodox tempi, is the best so far; however, as a recording it presents many problems, for if one adjusts the dynamic controls at a place where the pianissimi can be heard and enjoyed, one may find oneself blasted out of the room on the loud passages. As a recording the Weingartner set is more satisfactory, but not as an interpretation.

*Eighth Symphony* (Beethoven)—Koussevitzky does a fine job on this work, al-

though here too his interpretation seems to us slightly more dramatic than is called for.

*Ninth Symphony* (Beethoven) — The Weingartner version is more traditional in style than the Stokowski, but the latter is a better recording job. The text of the final movement is sung in English in the Stokowski version.

The Four Symphonies of Brahms—As to the Brahms symphonies on records, it is but fair to ask the reader whether he prefers the romantic or the classical element stressed in Brahms. There is no question that they both exist. Most of us like the latter, but some are decidedly in favor of the former. Walter definitely stresses the romantic in his readings; Weingartner is more austere. By and large, the Weingartner *First* has been more widely endorsed, yet if one likes a stress of sentiment in this work the Walter set will meet requirements. Beecham gives the finest reading of the *Second* from every standpoint, and the recording is eminently satisfactory. Both Weingartner and Walter offer fine performances of the *Third*, with the edge on recording in favor of the former. As to the *Fourth*, to date it would seem to be Weingartner; but it is rumored that Koussevitzky has made a recording of this work and it might be well for those interested to wait for this set.

*Fifth Symphony* (Schubert)—The Beecham set is a phonograph classic; it is a rarely satisfactory reading.

*C major Symphony* (Schubert)—Walter's set is the best in our estimation; only in one movement, the second, does Stock gain an edge. The reproductive qualities of the Stock set are less desirable than those of the Walter.

*Unfinished Symphony* (Schubert)—We like best the Beecham set, but the new Bruno Walter (black label set—Victor) is a worthy version. Koussevitzky has done a magnificent job with this work; as a recording it is splendidly realistic, and though to our taste the emotional qualities of the music seem somewhat over-intensified, the effectiveness of his reading cannot be denied.

Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Symphonies (Tchaikowsky) — Koussevitzky's *Fourth* is the best. As to the *Fifth Symphony*,

neither the Stokowski nor the Rodzinski is the definitive performance; the first is excessively emotional and given to some arbitrary tempi, while the second is simply a straightforward exposition. Rodzinski's is the better recording. It happens that Beecham has recorded the *Fifth*, and we are given to understand his version will be made available during the winter. Regarding the *Sixth*, Furtwaengler's version is widely endorsed as the best. We hear it is scheduled to be released here some time this winter. Of the versions we have heard, Ormandy's is the best recording.

## Overtones

**R**UMORS of much activity in the recording studios of the major companies have come in but all inquiries are met with a polite but firm "no information given out" reply. Although we hear many rumors, we do not print all of them because the sources are not always trustworthy. Sometimes, however, rumors which are wrong can bear fruit. This would seem to be the case, if our latest information can be trusted, as regards Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*. Recently, we stated in this department that rumor had it that Koussevitzky, who had played this work at the Berkshire Festival, had recorded it. Our informant was a musician supposedly in the know. Inquiries to the sponsors of Koussevitzky's recordings brought back a denial, we are told, of such a recording having been made. Now the ever elusive rumor has it that *Mathis der Maler* has been recorded this past month by the Philadelphia Orchestra. Well, if we stirred up interest in Hindemith's work by printing our first rumor rightly or wrongly, at least we did accomplish something.

Richard Crooks and Dorothy Maynor have both been busy in the recording studios lately. The Negro soprano is said to have made at least a dozen lieder (may we expect an album set?) and several operatic arias with orchestra, including *Depuis le jour* from *Louise* and *Air de Lia* from *L'Enfant prodigue*.

November, 1940

To the many inquiries we have received as to whether Rachmaninoff has made any new piano recordings, we can say yes, and we understand these include a group of solos and at least two concerto recordings.

### EUROPEAN RECORD RELEASES

ARENSKY: *Variations on a Theme of Tschaikowsky*; Boyd Neel String Orch. Decca X261/2.

BACH: *Concerto in F minor* (3 sides); and MOZART: *Das Donnerwetter*; Edwin Fischer and his Chamber Orch. H.M.V. DB4679/80.

BACH-WALTON: *The Wise Virgins* (Ballet); Walton and Sadlers Wells Orch. H.M.V. C178/79.

BOYCE-LAMBERT: *The Prospect Before Us* (Ballet); Lambert and Sadlers Wells Orch. H.M.V. C7547/48.

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 2*; Weingartner and London Sym. Orch. Columbia LX-899/903.

LISZT: *Mephisto Waltz* (3 sides); and BEETHOVEN: *Overture — Ruins of Athens*; Weingartner and London Phil. Orch. Columbia LX897/98.

MOZART: *Piano Concerto in A major*, K 414; Louis Kentner, Beecham and London Phil. Orch. Columbia LX894/96.

MOZART: *Three Country Dances*; and *Minuet* (K. 334); Blech and Berlin Phil. Orch. H.M.V. DB1714.

RACHMANINOFF: *Prelude in C sh. mi., Op. 3, No. 2*; and *Prelude in G minor, Op. 23, No. 5*; Benno Moisevitch. H.M.V. C3184.

VIVALDI-SILOTI: *Concerto Grosso in D minor, Op. 3, No. 11* (3 sides); and HANDEL: *Larghetto* from *Concerto Grosso No. 12*; Koussevitzky and Boston Sym. Orch. H.M.V. DB3668/69.

The English lists in the past two months contain more and more releases of American recordings which have been issued here in the past two years. But even in the face of conditions as they are, apparently not a little recording is being accomplished. This is only one cause for admiring the indomitable spirit of the English at this time. An example of England's international spirit in music matters is illustrated in the issuance of the Mozart disc above emanating from the German recording studios.

## New Scores

### CHAMBER SUITES AND CONCERTI

GROSSI. 352 pages. THE PIANO CONCERTOS OF BACH, BEETHOVEN AND BRAHMS. 352 pages. ROMANTIC AND MODERN PIANO CONCERTOS. 352 pages. CLASSIC VIOLIN CONCERTOS. 304 pages. Miniature Arrow Scores, edited and devised by Albert E. Wier. Longmans, Green and Co., New York. Price \$3.00 each, paper binding.

▲ It can be assumed that our readers are already familiar with the arrow-marked miniature score editions of Albert E. Wier. At various times we have reviewed other volumes in the series and have discussed his use of arrows which are intended to aid the uninitiated into the joys of score reading. The latest of the series to be released (others are scheduled to follow) deal with chamber suites, concerti grossi, piano and violin concertos. Their contents are noted below.

The first volume, *Chamber Suites and Concerti Grossi*, contains the six Brandenburg Concertos and the four orchestral suites of Bach; two concerti grossi by Corelli—No. 3 in C minor and No. 8, *Christmas Night Concerto*; the twelve concerti grossi of Handel; four serenades (K. 361, 239, 286, 388) and four divertimenti (K. 205, 270, 334, 287) of Mozart; a Telemann suite, for flute and strings; and four Vivaldi concerto grossi—Op. 3, Nos. 2, 8, 10, and 11.

The second volume contains seven clavier

concertos by Bach; Beethoven's five piano concertos; and Brahms' two piano concertos.

The third volume contains Chopin's two piano concertos; Franck's *Symphonic Variations*; Grieg's *Concerto in A minor*; Liszt's two piano concertos; Mendelssohn's *Concerto in G minor*, Op. 25; Pederewski's *Concerto in A Minor*, Op. 17; Rachmaninoff's *Concerto in C minor*, Op. 18; Schumann's *Concerto in A minor*, Op. 54; Saint-Saens' *Concerto in G minor*, Op. 35; Shostakovich's *Concerto in C minor*, Op. 35; and Tchaikowsky's *Concerto in B flat minor*, Op. 23.

The fourth volume contains Bach's two solo violin concertos and the two-violin concertos in D minor; Beethoven's *Triple Concerto*; Mendelssohn's *Concerto in E minor*, Op. 56; seven Mozart concertos—K. 207, 211, 216, 218, 219, 268, 271a; Schubert's *Concertstück in D major*; Spohr's *Concerto in A minor*, Op. 47; Tartini's *Concerto in D major*; Viotti's *Concerto No. 22 in A minor*; and Vivaldi's *Concerto in A minor*, Op. 3, No. 6, and G minor, Op. 6, No. 1.

As in previous volumes the printing is well contrived, with four sections of musical scoring to each page. This allows for a visualization of eight pages of scoring at one time. The page size of each of the volumes is 9" by 12". A complete list of all scores can be obtained from the publisher. The interested reader will observe that the editor has drawn mostly on those works which are available in recording.

### From the Letter of an English Journalist

"Have tried quite a lot of raid shelters. Main plan is to divide large basements into smallish compartments, well reinforced with extra concrete walls; comforting sight. All have narrow wood or concrete sets. In one under a cinema, waitress comes around with tea, and attendant brings papers for children . . . Some shelters have portable gramophones where concerts of light music are enjoyed, but mostly people bring books and papers and read, or else converse. I carry a book in my pocket all the time . . . One London musical editor sleeps in the firm's basement now, ready to get out at any moment. This probably helps to get the work done, because the interruptions are many. These bombing interruptions can be deucedly annoying; three times last Saturday the Mrs. went out to get food from the stores, and each time a raid warning came on, and the shops closed up. By the time all the warnings were over, the shops were closed for the day. So we had to take to a tin for Sunday meals . . . I wanted to send a parcel of records to a friend in Northern Ireland but the P. O. told me I must apply to Permit Officer for a form. Only three firms have permits to send records out of the Kingdom, and they have endless forms to fill out."

## Collectors' Corner

### Four Famous Voices of the Past



SAINT-SAENS: *Samson and Delilah* — *Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix*; and DONIZETTI: *La Favorita*—*O mon Fernand*; sung by Felia Litvinne. IRCC 10-inch disc 5011, price \$1.75.

MASSENET: *Herodiade*—*Il est doux*; and SCHUBERT: *Die junge Nonne*; sung by Susan Strong. IRCC 12-inch disc 159, price \$2.25.

LEONCAVALLO: *Pagliacci* — *Ballatella*; and VERDI: *Il Lombardi*—*se vano e il pregare*; sung by Claudia Muzio. IRCC 12-inch disc 175, price \$2.25.

SCHUMANN: *Du bist wie eine Blume*; and BRAHMS: *Feldeinsamkeit*; sung by Julia Culp with piano accompaniment (electrical recording). IRCC 10-inch disc 171, price \$1.75.

▲ The enterprising International Record Collectors Club (Bridgeport, Conn.) seems to be the only source of genuine collectors' news today. This organization still continues to uncover interesting and worthwhile recordings of the past by familiar and unfamiliar singers. Here we have two recordings by singers whose careers began in the late nineties, and two others of singers who were unrivalled in their respective fields during the third decade of this century.

Felia Litvinne, born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1860, was a student of Mme. Barth-Banderoli and Victor Maurel. She made her debut in 1896 in Paris and a year later was heard at our own Metropolitan Opera. Her roles included the main Wagnerian, French and Italian operatic parts. Several years ago IRCC released a recording by this artist of the *Willow Song* from *Otello*, which unfortunately did not

convey this lady's vocal gifts in the best light. Here, in contralto solos, we find her vocal quality liquid and rich, her style noble and composed. If her upper voice contained any of the richness of the lower, Litvinne must have been a most impressive artist. There is nothing sensational about either of her selections here, but there is genuine artistic dignity and admirable vocal assurance. The recording is clear.

Susan Strong, born in Brooklyn, N. Y., in 1875, studied with the Hungarian Korbay and at the Royal College of Music in London. She made her debut at Covent Garden in 1895, and later sang in Italy. She appeared at the Metropolitan Opera in 1899-1900. She was equally successful in French, Italian and German operas. From these recordings one gains the impression that the soprano was a gifted artist with an incredibly sweet voice. Although she sang such parts as Aida and the three Brünnhildes, both of these recordings give the impression that she was more lyrical than dramatic. In neither the Massenet aria nor the Schubert song, which has an accompaniment more suitable to Wagner than to Schubert, does the singer obtain a real climax; but this may be due to the exigencies of recording technique in 1906 and 1907, when she made these records. The present disc is autographed by the artist.

The Muzio disc is a valuable contribution to the small existent collection of this noted soprano's available recordings. Born in 1892, Muzio died in her forty-fourth year at the height of her artistic career. There are few people who heard Muzio

who did not agree that she was one of the greatest singers of her time. Both of the arias here were originally made in 1919, when Muzio was in her full prime; she was then singing at the Metropolitan, where she was regarded by many as the greatest Aida after Emma Eames. The limpid beauty of her tonal production, her exquisite pianissimi, and her vibrant full voice, are all evidenced here in an unforgettable manner. Nedda was one of her best roles, and her singing of the famous *Ballatella* will prove a tender souvenir for all who heard her in the part. The unfamiliar aria from an early Verdi opera, from a part we do not believe the singer ever essayed, gives an idea of Muzio's versatility, since it has more florid passages. The recording of the *Ballatella* clearly illustrates the use that was made of the bass clarinet in place of low strings in acoustic orchestral accompaniments, owing to the fact that the low tones of the cellos and basses could not be recorded.

It seems hardly necessary to speak of the musical worth of the above recordings of three famous singers like these, two of who are no longer with us. One buys these discs not primarily for the music but for the singers' artistry. Collectors interested in mementos of artists of the past will find these records worthy examples of their artistry.

The Julia Culp disc is one of the two the singer made in 1930. It is fully representative of her rare gifts, and is a satisfactory recording. All admirers of great lieder singing would do well to acquire this record; for Culp had few peers in the intimacy and richness of nuance of her vocal style.

### Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 73)

and still be able to stay in the same room when fortissimi came along.

About a year later a further development in recording occurred—the extension of the frequency range. Stokowski's recording of Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* fully illustrates the acquisition of new "high" values in recording. The term "high fidelity" had been adopted in the trade, and it was but natural that this new type of re-

cording should have that name tacked onto it.

In the past year there has been increasing evidence that the higher frequencies are being recorded with greater signal level (increased amplitude) than ever before. However, the reader should not get the idea that this means a further extension of the frequency range. As a matter of fact, leading engineers tell us that recordings today do not go much above 7500 c.p.s., and further that it is possible to cut higher vibration-frequencies into lateral cut discs but not to retain them there. Those, for example, above 7000 are generally lost in one or two playings. Only in hill and dale recording is it possible to keep "highs" above this value.

Although recordings are cut up to 7000 c.p.s., the majority of commercial machines do not reproduce frequencies much above 5500. The new Philco, with its so-called light-beam pickup, is a case in point; the machine we heard in demonstration cut off flat at 5000. However, it stands to reason that the leading record companies that also manufacture machines allow for the full reproduction of the frequency range in the record; that is, in their more expensive machines. It is generally conceded that machines in the lower price brackets cannot be made to reproduce a wide frequency range. Because so many people have acquired players and small table-model phonographs, which by virtue of their modest cost do not permit the full reproduction of the frequency range in the record, recording engineers have recently deemed it advisable to make recordings with greatly strengthened or augmented high frequencies. The object has been, according to one manufacturer, to better the reproduction on the cheaper machines owned by the majority of record buyers.

Such contentions would seem to imply that an improvement in recording is involved here, but this is not always the case; for the kind of high-frequency compensation thus achieved is not a true reproduction of what was being played in the original. Some record buyers and at least one critic, are inclined to label this procedure pure distortion, but with this statement we cannot entirely agree. For, if this is simply



distortion, then the whole modern system of recording is distortion; for certain compensations as well as compromises are essential to the realization of the many life-like recordings that are issued today. With the acquisition of the dynamic microphone technique, back in 1935, it was determined that the bass end of the recording would have to be attenuated in order to permit the realization of a fuller dynamic range. This was one of the main reasons for the adoption of tone controls on machines, and more particularly the bass booster, which allowed for the return of bass volume lost in recording. At this point it might be well to point out that the magnetic pickup is notoriously poor, when not compensated, in the bass end, while the crystal has a much more even response and does not require as much compensation.

A number of readers who own "high fidelity" equipment have written to us that they find not a few of the newer recordings made in this country unconditionally hard in tonal quality in the higher ranges, presumably because of the increased amplitude on the high end of the recording. Further, they profess to have difficulty in getting some of these recordings to reproduce satisfactorily on their machines. It must be admitted that in some cases we ourselves have encountered similar difficulty. But in fairness to the majority of our readers, in such cases we make an effort to hear these recordings not only on our own high-frequency set but also on a standard "popular priced" machine. The latter type of machine is used in the offices of the magazine. If we encounter trouble in both cases we either state or intimate this fact in our review.

Naturally all this makes for an occasional difference of opinion between the reviewer and his reader, for many of these recordings take on different characteristics on different machines. Frequently when there is too great an amplitude in the recording on the high end this can be taken care of by the proper use of the treble tone control. In other words, by attenuating the "highs" down to a desirable level. The use of a non-metallic needle for this type of recording has also proved effective because it acts in part to dampen out much of the highs.

Most so-called high-fidelity machines are equipped with tone controls which are adequate to take care of such problems of reproduction, despite the assertions of one or two critics to the contrary. It has become evident to us upon more than one occasion that not all people who own the best equipment know how to manipulate their controls for the best results. One point may be stressed here: all owners of high-fidelity equipment should have, in addition to a bass control, a volume control with built-in bass compensation, so that when it becomes necessary to turn a recording down to a level that is desirable from the auditory standpoint the reproduction will remain clear and not sound as though it had suddenly acquired a veil over it.

Whether this procedure of increasing the amplitude of the higher frequencies in recording will be continued, we cannot say. There is some evidence that recorders have modified its use; and other evidence that it is being increased. Recent Columbia recordings, like the new Barbirolli and Stokowski sets, show an over-emphasis on the high end which has presented a very definite problem in reproduction for many of our readers who own both standard and high fidelity equipment. Certainly, these recordings do not compare favorably as orchestral reproductions, with those earlier Columbia sets made by the Cleveland, Chicago, and Minneapolis Symphony Orchestras. The contention that some of the latter do not reproduce satisfactorily on lower priced machines, and more particularly on the players operating through radios, is not fully borne out by our experiments. We have found that few people know how to operate players successfully and it has been our experience by and large that if the owner of the smaller machine will open up his treble control on the radio fully and reduce the volume control on the player, he will find such recordings reproduce as well as he could ask them to.

From all of the above it is clear that there is an unfortunate lack of standardization both in recording and in reproducing equipment. We have since the inception of this magazine made it a point to assist our readers by giving them freely on request the benefit of our musical and technical

knowledge. We sincerely believe that our long association with recorded music permits us to give authoritative advice. However, there are individual problems in reproduction that come up from time to time which, because there is no standardization of reproduction, does not always permit us to give a definitive answer. Needless to say we make every effort to answer all inquiries as fully as possible.

## The Library Shelf

**MUSIC IN THE MIDDLE AGES**, with an Introduction on Music of Ancient Times. By Gustave Reese. W. W. Norton & Co. New York, 1940. 502 pages. Price \$5.00.

▲ Here is a book that will be indispensable to anyone interested in medieval music. After an introductory section on the music of ancient Asia Minor and Greece, it proceeds to an analysis of the various bodies of early Christian Chant, Gregorian Chant, secular monody, and sacred and secular polyphony. The period covered extends from pre-historic times to 1453, the date of the death of John Dunstable.

Every important manifestation of the art during this long stretch of time is discussed. The writings of contemporary theorists are listed and considered, the different forms of notation and the instru-

ments used at various periods are described, and the music itself—its forms and their development through the centuries—is exhaustively treated, with many musical examples, some of them previously unpublished.

We are thus given, for the first time in English, a remarkable picture of the bewildering richness and variety of this old music. And, again for the first time, we have conveniently gathered for us in one place all the essential facts known about such composers as Perotin, Machaut, Landini, and Dunstable.

The author, who is Associate Editor of *The Musical Quarterly* and has lectured on medieval and renaissance music at New York University, has packed into this book the result of years of study and research, taking into account the findings of all the latest investigators as well as those of the best of older scholars. For those readers who wish more detailed information about any particular aspects of medieval music, there is a copious and detailed bibliography to guide them to the special literature about those aspects.

There are fascinating illustrations, and, after the bibliography, an extensive list of those records which represent the most authentic performances available of the music discussed in the book.

In short, we have here a most useful reference work of extraordinary scholarship, a credit to its author and to American musicology in general.

## Correspondence from England

"There was more than irony in the fact that I was listening to Wagner's Prelude to *Meistersinger* when Hitler's bombers flew over my garden. It would make a good story to say a bomb crashed with one of the Wagnerian climaxes, but the fact remains the bombs fell into some of those fields where I toiled so strenuously all summer . . . I haven't been able to write about music, much less think about it. Once in a while I turn to the gramophone for solace, but my nerves are so on edge I cannot concentrate as I formerly did. The music of Wagner, who probably would have been as strong a Nazi as any had he lived in these times, still gives me the greatest pleasure . . . We have had some good orchestral concerts by wireless, but I get small pleasure out of them . . ."

## Record Notes and Reviews

*It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.*

▲ The publication date of the magazine was unavoidably delayed this month owing to the unusually late arrival (October 30) of the Columbia records. Rather than deprive our readers of all mention of one of the largest companies in the field, we delayed publication as long as possible. At the time of going to press some of the Columbia issues had still not arrived, but we have been able to deal with a number of the most important. The remainder will be discussed in our next issue.

### Orchestra

BACH: *The Musical Offering* (adaptation by H. T. David); played by Yella Pessl (harpsichord), Sylvan Shulman and Harold Kohon (violins), Louis Kievman (viola), Alan Shulman (cello), Frances Blaisdell (flute), Robert Bloom (oboe), Albert Goltzer (English horn), and Benjamin Kohon (bassoon). Victor set M-709, six discs, price \$6.50.

▲ As Dr. David tells us, the *Musical Offering*, written by Bach in 1747 and dedicated to Frederick the Great, is based on a theme that the monarch had given to the composer as a subject for an improvised fugue. Bach's dedication throws a vivid light on the importance of patronage. He writes: "In deepest humility I dedicate herewith to Your Majesty a Musical Offering, the noblest part of which derives from Your own august Hand. With an awesome pleasure I remember the very special royal Grace when . . . your Majesty's Self deigned to play me a fugue subject on the clavier . . . [Then Bach explains that he now has worked out the theme more perfectly.] This undertaking . . . has none other than this irreproachable intent, to glorify, if only in a small point, the Fame of a Monarch, whose Greatness and Power, as in all the Sciences of War and Peace, so also especially in Music, all men must admire and honor . . ."

The work is divided into five sections. It opens with a three-part ricercar (a fugal composition using the most elaborate devices of counterpoint), continues with various canons on the King's theme, a trio-sonata, canonic elaborations on the theme, and concludes with a tremendous six-part ricercar. From the purely technical point of view, the *Musical Offering* will provide one of the most intellectual experiences a music lover can have. Bach takes an involved theme and twists it into the most astounding convolutions ever conceived by the mind of a composer. Now, by all odds this should become boring — yet behold the magic of Bach! Every measure is fascinating, and after repeated hearings, when the unity of the whole becomes apparent, the emotional side of the music takes precedence over the purely technical aspect, which is submerged in the musical values.

Still, the music may be a hard nut for many listeners to crack, and we do not suggest that one sit down with a determined attitude and grimly hear the set straight through. For the first week or so it might be better to dip into it, brouse among the various discs, and take samplings. Sooner or later one will perceive the work as a whole, and close acquaintance will make it one of the most prized sets in any collection.

The performers are the same as those who introduced the work to New York on January 20th, 1940, under the auspices of the Bach Circle of New York. A better ensemble is obtained on these records than was evident at the concert. For one thing, the harpsichord has not the undue prominence that was somewhat disturbing at that time; for another, the performance is technically smoother. There was more spirit, however, in the Town Hall performance — the crab canon, as I remember it, was done there with more spirit

and humor—; only a slight prosaic quality prevents the interpretation here from being outstanding. The individual performers acquit themselves nobly. Miss Pessl demonstrates a sensitive feeling for the musical line, and shows splendid musicianship throughout. None of the other musicians can be singled out for special praise, for the excellent teamwork prohibits mention of any individual.

From the recording standpoint the album leaves little to be desired. Except in a few places where parts of the ensemble are heard as if from a distance, the reproduction is full and realistic. This is the first complete recording of the work. Several recordings of various sections — the closing rincer and the trio sonata, among others — may be found in the catalogues, but most be can discounted as musically unreliable.

—H. C. S.

**BRAINE:** *Pavane "El Greco"*, and *Habenera "Lazy Cigarette"*; played by Eastman Rochester Symphony Orchestra, direction Howard Hanson. Victor 10-inch disc 2212, price 75c.

▲ Continuing his series of American works on records, Howard Hanson turns his attention here to two impressionistic compositions by Robert Braine. Braine, born in Ohio in 1896, has distinguished himself as composer, pianist, and conductor. Much of his music is impressionistic in character and shows the influence of modern jazz. We find the *Pavane* modern in the popular genre and Spanish only by rhythmic derivation. The *Habancera* shows some Cuban as well as foxtrot influences: in fact the piece could be nicely arranged for dancing. Dr. Hanson gives straightforward readings of both these compositions, and the recording is excellently contrived.

—P. H. R.

**ELGAR:** *Pomp and Circumstance Marches* No. 1 in D major and No. 4 in G major; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Sir Henry Wood. Columbia disc 70364, price \$1.00.

▲ Elgar had a strong sense of the English national feeling and patriotic pride, and it was evidenced in quite a number of his musical works. Brought up in the Victorian era, he had not a little of the Kipling

variety of British fervor, which took a decidedly provincial turn upon more than one occasion. His *Pomp and Circumstance* marches are cases in point. No. 1 certainly furnished the material for an A-No.-1 Victorian ballad, *The Land of Hope and Glory*. Wood probably plays these marches frequently at his "Prom" concerts, and no doubt the greater part of the audience gets a kick out of their patriotic qualities. There's a strain of romanticism mixed with the military spirit in these compositions, and Sir Henry wisely gives them straightforward utterance. The recording is sonorous.

—P. G.

**MOUSSORGSKY-STOKOWSKI:** *Pictures at an Exhibition*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Leopold Stokowski. Victor set M-706, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ If anybody had asked you, dear reader, to prepare a list of thirty or forty piano pieces that needed transcribing or retranscribing, would you have included Moussorgsky's *Pictures* in that list? Neither would we. But here they are, in a new and shiny arrangement by Mr. Stokowski, who feels that Ravel's orchestration "is a masterpiece in the Gallic manner. Moussorgsky's music is the quintessence of the Slavic spirit . . . I have made a symphonic transcription of this music in which I have aimed to preserve and express this Slavic character."

The present reviewer confesses that he sees nothing particularly French in the Ravel version and nothing especially Russian in the Stokowski. The music itself remains quintessentially Slavic in both; and, as far as the instrumentation is concerned, we have noticed some of Ravel's devices used in works by such Gallic composers as Rimsky-Korsakoff and Stravinsky and some of Stokowski's in passages by those Russians Berlioz and Wagner.

Let us glance at what the eminent conductor has done. He has omitted two of the "pictures" — *Tuileries* and *The Market Place at Limoges*. His orchestration is on the whole quite different from Ravel's being more complex, more varied, containing more "effects." Sometimes he breaks up a long melody by orchestrating each phrase in a different way. This happens

in the very first appearance of the "Promenade" theme; and the result is the curious impression than Moussorgsky, as he strolls about the art-gallery, changes his costume with each step. The instrumentation of some of the "pictures" is neither better nor worse than Ravel's: it is simply different. Only in one does it seem to us definitely better — *The Old Castle*, where Stokowski uses an English horn for the main melody, as Cailliet did in the orchestration Victor recorded two years ago. This, in our opinion, is an improvement over Ravel's saxophone. Stokowski seems to have entirely missed the sly humor of *Samuel Goldenburg and Schmuyle*. He has orchestrated it as though it concerned Schelomo instead of Schmuyle. In *Baba Yaga and The Great Gate of Kiev* he really cuts loose and piles on an assortment of the fanciest tricks in the orchestral bag, ending with the gaudiest of all — chimes reverberating after the rest of the orchestra has ceased playing.

This makes the third transcription of Moussorgsky's work that Victor has issued. First came the Ravel version, made by Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony — a set that is beginning to show signs of age. Then came the Cailliet version, made by Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. We agree with our reviewer of that set that as a transcription it was inferior to the first. The present arrangement is said to have been made for use in one of Walt Disney's forthcoming movies. We wish Stokowski had made a new recording of the Ravel transcription instead.

—C. C.

MOZART: *Don Giovanni* — Overture; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia disc 70365D, price \$1.00.

▲ Beecham has not only the style but the imagination for the perfect performance of this music. The opening chords are associated with the stone statue of the Commendatore. There is a shudder in the introduction of this overture, and Beecham brings that shudder out. The allegro conveys the Don's pursuit of pleasure.

To those who know Beecham's Mozart, it is hardly necessary to recommend this disc. No higher praise could be given

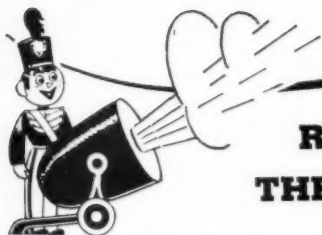
it than that bestowed upon it by our friend W. R. Anderson in *The Gramophone*; he said: "Even if I knew my gramophone and records were going to be blown up tomorrow I should buy this record today—for having heard it one could not help acquiring so fine an achievement in interpretation and recording". The quality of recording attained in this disc is far more satisfactory to our way of thinking than not a few of the domestic recordings which Columbia has released recently.

—P. H. R.

RACHMANINOFF: *Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 44*; played by the Philadelphia Symphony, direction Sergei Rachmaninoff. Victor set M-712, nine sides, price \$5.00.

▲ Although this symphony was completed in 1936, about thirty years after the première of the *Second Symphony*, there is no outstanding difference in the musical treatment and philosophy underlying both. Rachmaninoff is a conservative who makes no concessions to any form of radical composition. As early as 1901, when the *C minor Concerto* was composed, the composer selected the means of expression that he considered most suitable and has since adhered to his original principles. Thus the present symphony, as indeed all works by the composer, cannot be judged by the standards used to evaluate composers of a more modern bent. It is the product of a sincere and capable musician who consciously writes in the style of an age that is considered moribund by most living composers. There is no use in growing excited about the lack of certain elements that have been familiarized by more progressive spirits; one takes or rejects the symphony for what it is, knowing in advance what to expect.

And so anyone who enjoys the *Second Symphony* will like the present one too. For, as stated above, there is much similarity in mood and treatment. The opening measures are bleaker and more austere than one usually encounters in the composer's orchestral music, but it is not long before the cellos take up a typical Rachmaninoff theme, emotional and surging. Nearly every measure simply shrieks the composer's idiom; all of the familiar mannerisms are present, including the rich harmonic pro-



## RCA VICTOR SALUTES THE NEW CONCERT SEASON

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### Other Notable Selections

#### From the November Victor List

Reginald Kell, Clarinetist, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra in an eloquent realization of *Concerto in A Major* (Mozart, K. 622), one of the truly great works written for solo clarinet and orchestra. Album M-708\*, 7 sides, list price \$4.00 (old price basis \$5.75) . . . Also superb single Victor Red Seal Records . . . Tibbett singing two splendid songs by Handel . . . Helen Traubel in further revelations of a magnificent voice, displayed in lieder and opera selections . . . Lovely, familiar songs in the glorious vocal style of Marjorie Lawrence . . . Two American pieces by Robert Braine, an offering of the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra, Howard Hanson conducting . . . Ossy Renardy in a brilliant showpiece for Saint-Saens . . . and two Russian songs in rich orchestral dress by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, conducted by Fiedler. Be sure to consult the latest lists at your Victor Record dealer's.

\*Also available in automatic sequences. An explanatory booklet accompanies each of the above Victor Albums.



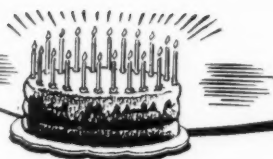
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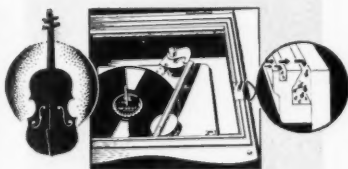
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gressions, the melodic habit of sliding down in semitones, the orthodox development, and the full-bodied orchestration. In several places one notices a more sophisticated orchestral technique than that which previously has come from the great pianist's pen.

To this reviewer the second movement is the weakest of the three. Genuine inspiration seems lacking, and there is often a forced quality that suggests a formularized working-out of material without a motivating creative impulse. But the third movement is again the composer at his best. One cannot easily forget the diabolical fugue (which begins near the end of side 7) or the rhythmic drive in the concluding measures. On the whole, also, the symphony is less Russian and far more cosmopolitan than that in E minor.

The big surprise of the set (except to those who were present at the Rachmaninoff festival at Carnegie Hall last Winter) is the fine ability the composer displays as a conductor. There is a real punch to the direction and, so far as could be ascertained without a score, there are no loose ends. Rachmaninoff turns in a neatly welded, dynamically sure job, and has been accorded a lifelike, brilliant recording—one of the best recordings, in fact, that Victor has released for the past few months.

—H. C. S.

**SCHUBERT:** *Symphony No. 2 in B flat major*; played by the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony, direction of Howard Barlow. Columbia set M-420, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Here we have Schubert in all his early buoyancy; he wrote this work in three months during his eighteenth year. It was one of the most prolific years in the composer's life, a year described by some writers as the "wonder year". He was engaged in teaching at this time and his outlook on symphonic music, as the annotator says here, was largely determined by the repertoire of the school orchestra. Since Haydn and Mozart predominated, it is understandable that these composers influenced him in this work. The opening largo is reminiscent of some of Haydn's earlier ones; there is no suggestion here of the tragic note that we hear in Schubert's later symphonies. The whole score is written with youthful

enthusiasm, as though the composer was in a holiday mood; and since it was begun on December 10, 1814 and completed the 24th of the following March, it is not unlikely the holidays set the pace for the work. There is a marked suggestion of Mozart in the allegro vivace of the first movement, and not a little of the spirit of Rossini. The slow movement is naively simple. The annotator says it is nearer to Haydn than to Mozart, which is true as regards its patterns; but the theme upon which the movement is based is almost a direct quotation from Ottavio's *Il mio tesoro* from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. The minuet stems from Haydn; but its trio is derived from the theme of Schubert's second movement. It is quite possible that the finale "has the rhythm of Viennese folk songs", but there is much of Rossini in this movement and a strongly Italianate feeling. The symphony is a lot of fun, not to be treated too seriously but to be enjoyed for its impetuousness and refreshing naiveté. Although there are strong evidences of the influences mentioned in this music, there are at the same time characteristic Schubertian touches, and one encounters harmonic devices which he employed a great deal in his later works.

Howard Barlow plays this work with admirable precision; but there are times when one feels his reading lacks an essential flexibility of treatment; yet this may well be due to the acoustical qualities of the radio studio in which the recording was made. His orchestra is excellently drilled, and the woodwind section is especially praiseworthy for its tonal nuance. The recording is good, but there is a lack of the resonant sonority behind forte passages that we hear in the discs made by other symphony orchestras for Columbia.

—P. H. R.

**STRAVINSKY:** *Petrushka—Suite*; played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of Igor Stravinsky. Columbia set X-177, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ The composer assuredly has a right to show us upon occasion how he wishes his music to be played. Stravinsky has recorded in the past not only this suite, but over a dozen of his other works. But in

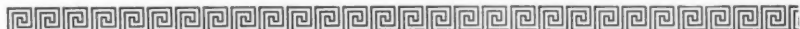
none of the orchestral recordings excluding the *Sacre* issued last month, can it be honestly said that the composer has given us a truly vital reading of the music. His earlier version of the *Petrouchka Suite* had little of the luster or exuberance of the Koussevitzky recording. It must be admitted however, that the present reading is superior for its greater wealth of nuance, almost achieving the brilliance and the exhilaration which other more eminent conductors have invested the dance sections included here. *Petrouchka*, like almost all of Stravinsky's major scores, is essentially a virtuoso work, and it demands this sort of treatment. Stokowski has given us a superb reading of the complete score; one which we believe it would be difficult to equal. Of course, there is room for a good recorded performance of the suite the composer arranged for concert use from the complete ballet. There are many who undoubtedly feel that this suite is sufficient unto itself; and with these we would not quarrel, for much of the music of this score is purely musical caricature. The suite is comprised of the *Sbrove-Tide Fair*, *In Petrouchka's Room* and the *Grand Car-*

*nival*.

The playing here shows evidence of careful preparation; it was made last spring when the composer conducted some concerts with the orchestra, and it can be assumed that he had sufficient rehearsals to achieve the results he wished. As a recording, the set effectively reproduces the music and the instrumentation on a high fidelity machine was clearly outlined. Because of the late arrival of the discs we were unable to make any other tests. The fact that this is the authentic version of the composer, which he has been able to realize through his appearances with one of this country's foremost orchestras, irrefutably places a value on the recording. However, it may be noted that although the composer has the first word on his music, it seldom is true that he also has the last. —P. H. R.

TSCHAIKOWSKY (arr. W. Stewart): *Chanson Triste*; and *Song of the Volga Boatman* (arr. Glazounow); played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction Arthur Fiedler. Victor 10-inch disc 4527, price 75c.

▲ The Tschaiikowsky piece comes from a



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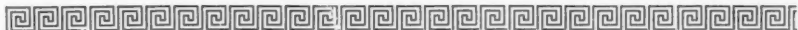
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group of piano compositions (Opus 40), and is of course widely known in various transcriptions. The present arrangement is an effective one for strings, which Mr. Fiedler wisely plays without stressing the music's sentiment.

Glazounow's arrangement of the *Song of the Volga Boatman* is perhaps the most widely played, hence its inclusion here. Koussevitzky has given us Stravinsky's arrangement for orchestra of this folk song; we daresay this disc will be as popular. Reproduction here is realistic without being too full.

—P. G.

WARLOCK: *Capriol Suite*; played by the Constant Lambert String Orchestra. Victor disc 13497, price \$1.00.

▲ The late Philip Heseltine composed under the nom de plume of Peter Warlock. Among the English composers of the 20th century, Warlock was surely one of the most gifted; there were a sensitivity and polish to his style that harkened back to the Elizabethan school. Warlock, in fact, made quite an extensive study of English music of that period, and edited many works of the Elizabethan lutenists as well as of Purcell. The lovely fantasias of the latter, which have been recorded, are played in the Warlock arrangements.

The present suite is an arrangement of six tunes from the famous 16th-century treatise on the dance by Thoinot Arbeau. The six tunes are *Basse Danse*, *Pavane*, *Tordion*, *Bransles*, *Pieds-en-l'air*, and *Mattachins*. The melody of *Pieds-en-l'air* has been also utilized by Delibes in his incidental music to *Le Roi s'amuse*.

Many readers will undoubtedly recall that this record was one of the selections included in our second prize list of single orchestral discs. (See our issue of May, 1940.) It might well have been one of the selections in the first prize list, for it is, in our estimation, one of the most treasurable single records of orchestral music in existence. There is a captivating old world charm to this music, and a refreshing naiveté reminiscent of a more stately kind of dancing than our own.

Some years ago English Decca brought forward a recording of the *Capriol Suite* by Anthony Bernard and the London Chamber Orchestra. That was never a satisfactory recording and this disc super-

sedes it in every way, for Constant Lambert gives an expressive and polished performance of the music. —P. H. R.

### Concerto

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto in D major, for violin and orchestra, Op. 61*; played by Jascha Heifetz and the NBC-Symphony Orchestra, direction Arturo Toscanini. Victor set M-705, nine sides, price \$5.00.

▲ It may well be that this set will become a phonograph classic, for it is one of the best recordings of its kind that has been brought out. Not only have we great solo playing, but we have superb team work by two of the most distinguished living musicians. True, there is the set of this work that Szigeti made with Bruno Walter, and the recording of the Mendelssohn concerto which Szigeti made with Beecham. In both of those there is evidence of magnificent team work; but in the Beethoven the violinist is much too close to the microphone, and the result is that Walter's orchestral background is rendered in part ineffectual. Here, in the Heifetz-Toscanini recording, the balance is almost perfect, with the result that when the violin is engaged with figuration the thematic material in the orchestra is heard far better than in any other previous recording. But this is hardly the whole story.

Despite the fact that this is admittedly the first great "modern" concerto of its kind, the first movement had always seemed overly long to us until we heard this performance. The prevailing mood of serenity in a movement as spacious as the first has always suggested the need of wider differentiation in tempi than Beethoven himself indicated. But, judging from the present performance, that need would seem to be more a matter of more subtle distinction of tone and coordination of the solo and orchestral parts than of tempi. Most conductors treat the orchestral part too much as a background for the soloist, unmindful of much thematic material which should be heard when the violin is engrossed purely with figuration. Among the reasons that this performance is so revealing to us is the fact that Toscanini brings out the inner lines, and also the fact that Heifetz subdues the purely technical figurations so that one's attention is not distracted from the orchestra in such

passages.

When Beethoven came to write this work he already had behind him four piano concertos and the Triple Concerto. His method of having the solo instrument derive its material from the orchestra, and the orchestra in turn acquire new material from the solo, was fully formulated. And since these structural details have never been fully exploited in previous recordings, their realization here helps to make this set the most authentic version of the work on records.

Moreover Heifetz plays with a technical and tonal polish that no other violinist we have ever heard has attained. Our great admiration for the Szigeti found us reluctant to give Heifetz the palm until we reached the third face of the recording. There, with the arrival of the development with its beautiful thematic material in the minor, Heifetz plays with such sentient poetic tone that one feels no other living violinist could duplicate his performance. The same is true of the slow movement. Both the soloist and the conductor achieve a brilliant polish in the light-hearted finale.

Of the many previous recorded versions of this concerto only the early Kreisler and Szigeti performances can be discussed in the same breath with the present one. Kreisler's tonal quality was a notable feature of his set, but the balance and quality of the recording were far from desirable. His later set was nowhere near as good as the earlier one. I have never admired the performance of either Wolfsthal or Kulenkampff, because their conception is marred by impure tonal execution, not to mention inadequate orchestral support.

As a recording, this is one of the best sets to emanate from the NBC studio. True, there is a lack of rich sonority in the loudest passages, but this is not so disturbing as in some previous sets. On the other hand there is often evidenced an intimacy between the violin and the orchestra that is seldom captured in violin concerto recordings. It is unfortunate that the breaks in this set are so abrupt; one in the rondo is decidedly bad. Until one has accustomed oneself to them they may prove very distracting. —P. H. R.

November, 1940

LISZT: *Hungarian Fantasia*; played by Benno Moiseivitch, piano and London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Constant Lambert; and *Mephisto Waltz*; played by the London Symphony Orchestra, direction Albert Coates. Victor set G-19, three discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Both of the previous recordings of the *Hungarian Fantasia* that were available in the United States were excellent. That by De Greef, although old and not nearly as well recorded as the later ones, was marked by some of the most fluid and liquid playing ever captured on phonograph discs. The Kilenyi version (Col. set X-120) is entirely different, stressing the virtuosic aspect of the music. Very similar is the present recording, where the soloist displays a brilliant and effective bravura. This set must be no more than two years old, for it is not listed in the 1938 H.M.V. catalogue and Lambert has not been long with that

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company. Moiseivitch is an outstanding virtuoso, and squeezes the very last drop out of the music. That, plus a good recording job, makes this set perhaps the best value among the recordings of this work. One must not discount the De Greef set, however, and connoisseurs will want both in their collection, for in one is exemplified the objective sweep of the modern virtuoso and in the other is set forth the delicacy, nuance, and sensitivity of a disappearing race of pianists.

The *Mephisto Waltz* is not nearly as clean-cut a recording and is blurred and muffled in spots. It is over seven years old. Although very familiar as a piano solo, the work seldom is heard in its orchestral dress, and this record is the only one available. Coates supplies a surge and drive, building up to an impressive climax. But how dull and unexciting the music sounds today!

—H. C. S.

**MOZART:** *Concerto in A major*, for clarinet and orchestra, K. 622; played by Reginald Kell and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Dr. Malcolm Sargent. Victor set M-708, seven sides, price \$4.00.

▲ Not all the orchestras in Mozart's day boasted clarinets, for the instrument was not commonly used in symphonies. Mozart may be called the first exploiter of its true possibilities; as early as his twenty-second year we find him writing to his father, "You can guess the lordly effect of a symphony with flutes, oboes and clarinets." That was the year he wrote his *Paris Symphony*, using clarinets for the first time in his symphonies, although he had experimented with the instrument previously. It seems strange to find that the first version of his great *G minor* Symphony, written ten years later, should have excluded clarinets; the reason for this is unknown.

I have never been of a mind with those who dismiss Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto* as a dull work. He wrote it only a few months before his untimely end, in a period when he was exhausted and in very poor health. I think that Eric Blom has expressed the truth in one sentence: "Somehow his precarious state seems to be reflected in the hectic beauty of the clarinet Concerto." There is in this music much of the touching beauty that is found in the

*Requiem*. There can be no doubt that the composer was completely captured by the quality of the instrument, and knew its technical as well as tonal potentialities. Like his *Trio* for clarinet, piano and viola, and his *Quintet* for clarinet and strings, this work was written for Anton Stadler, a fellow Freemason, and an accomplished player.

Despite his illness, Mozart brought both gaiety and radiance to his first movement, albeit these qualities are tinged with a sombre and wistful mood upon occasion. The writing here, as elsewhere in the work, often takes on chamber-music characteristics in its quiet intimacy and its frequently simple and economical scoring. This does not mean that Mozart has not attained contrast in his scoring, which calls for two flutes, two bassoons, two horns, and strings, besides the clarinet being used to double other instruments when they are not accompanying. The lovely adagio that follows owns a rare tenderness, and a deep feeling of pathos. This music arose from a troubled spirit, yet one that still dreamed of and believed in happiness and the beauty of the world. One writer has called this an autumnal slow movement, and this is true as to both its color and its spirit. The final rondo returns to a more cheerful mood, yet, as the annotator notes, it contains more than a hint of Mozart's sardonic wit.

As to the performance of this work, I find it all that anyone could ask. Kell is an eloquent clarinetist, and the grace and beauty of the work, as well as its shadings, are splendidly conveyed. Sargent gives the soloist good orchestral support, although the discerning listener may well feel that he does not feel the music as sensitively as does the soloist. The recording is excellent.

—P. H. R.

### Chamber Music

**BARTOK:** *Contrasts*, for violin, clarinet and piano; played by Joseph Szigeti, Benny Goodman, and Béla Bartok. Columbia set X-178, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Mr. Nicolas Slonimsky, the writer of the notes for this set, calls Bartok "the Janus of modern music". Janus was the Roman god who, according to some, had two heads, and according to others, had one head and two faces. "By birth and predi-



lection", says Slonimsky, "Bartok is attached to the folklore of his native Transylvania. At the same time he is an extremely sensitive modernist, one of the boldest of his times." Bartok might also be said to embody characteristics of the famous constellation twins Gemini; for he definitely shows a dual nature in the character of his music. It is by turns coolly cerebral and hauntingly beautiful; and this fact is borne out in the present composition.

Bartok composed the present work especially for Szigeti and Goodman in September, 1938. He is said to have a great admiration for both musicians. The first movement, called a *Recruiting Dance*, he describes as a Hungarian counterpart of the American blues; the second movement is a study in *Relaxation*, resembling a short and slow chorale; and the third movement is called *Fast Dance*. In this last movement Szigeti uses two violins—one pur-

posely mistuned, and his normally tuned instrument.

A casual hearing of this work is hardly a fair approach to it; it is unfortunate that the recording came so late for review that we were only able to have a few hearings. Familiarity with Bartok's two recorded string quartets, however, helped our orientation with the music. We are inclined to agree with the sponsors that this set may well rank as one of the most novel, exciting releases in recording history. This opinion is supported not only by the unusual music, but by the superb virtuoso performance it is given. There is correlation of tone here which suggests a complete affinity between the players. It is doubtful that any other three musicians could equal, much less surpass, this performance. And it would also seem unlikely that a better recording balance could have been attained at this time.



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Bartok's music is not immediately accessible for his style is both highly impersonal and deeply emotional. And this work, which is, as its name implies, purely a study in contrasts, is divided between what might be called mind music and heart music. The long first movement moves through patterns of intellectual abstractions and others of haunting beauty. The second movement is deeply felt; and the third movement has some interesting jazz-like connotations, with a poignantly dissonant ending.

—P. H. R.

### Violin

SAINT-SAËNS: *Concertstück*; played by Ossy Renardy, violin, accompanied by Walter Robert. Victor disc 17479, price \$1.00.

▲ Saint-Saëns' one-movement *Concerto No. 1 in A* was composed in 1859 and dedicated to Sarasate. Later a reduction for piano and violin was made by Theodore Spiering, who entitled the adaptation *Concertstück*. I presume that this is the version played here. The music is pleasant and agreeable, similar in style and form to many of the Frenchman's other compositions. Saint-Saëns must have turned out these things by the ream. It has been said that he was the greatest musician (not composer) since Bach; certainly he had every technical resource at his immediate command, and his tremendous output attests to his prolific qualities. As a composer he did not achieve the heights, perhaps just because composition came so easily to him. Henry Prunières has written the perfect estimate: "Saint-Saëns admirably represents one of the many aspects of the French temperament — that in which the mind and intelligence supplant sentiment and sometimes even feeling." The present work is an apt illustration of mentality usurping the place of emotion. Still one must enjoy the admirable balance, cool and even writing, and good taste of the *Concertstück*. Renardy performs with his usual insight and technical skill. Some may object to the too-forward tone of the piano accompaniment, although I rather enjoy the fervor with which Robert accompanies his partner. The recording is good.

—H. C. S.

### Keyboard

RAVEL: *Sonatine*; and *Menuet* from *Le Tombeau de Couperin*; played by Robert Casadesus. Columbia set X-179, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.00.

▲ This work dates from 1905, the year that Ravel was refused admittance to the trial competitions for the Prix de Rome. Since by that time he had already composed the quartet, *Shéhérazade*, and *Jeux d'eaux*, all of which were known to the public, the resultant scandal seems to have been justified. (Phillipe Gaubert, the eminent conductor, was the winner of the prize that year.)

Ravel's style as set forth in the *Sonatine* is virtually the same as that in the later piano works. Very few great composers have shown such maturity and development at such an early age. One notices with admiration the close-knit form, the economical utterances, the flair for exotic coloring, and the highly sophisticated harmonies. And not the least of the work's attributes is the sympathetic treatment the piano is accorded. Only a composer who knew the keyboard thoroughly could have written the brilliant passages of the last movement—passages that are by no means easy of execution, yet which are perfectly suited to the compass of hand. The minuet demonstrates the composer's fondness for dressing up old forms in modern clothing; this sort of thing can be very unesthetic, but Ravel at all times captured the spirit and essence of his model. Thus the minuet from *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1917), which Casadesus plays as a filler in this set, is a searching and faithful reinterpretation of an ancient form, not a slavish adaptation or arrangement.

Columbia has done an excellent job of capturing the tone of the piano, even if there could be a greater dynamic range. Part of this is the fault of the soloist, who as often as not plays pianissimo passages as loudly as piano and mezzo-piano sections. In Ravel the greatest attention must be paid to the dynamic markings, lest the subtle nuances of the composition be destroyed. The excessive speed with which Casadesus takes the finale leads to some

blurred passages, and again some of the delicate shading is lost. In many other places, however, the performance is exceptionally lucid and sensitive. Cortot has recorded the work for Victor, but both as a recording and interpretation the present set is superior. I imagine that Casadesu must be a difficult pianist to record, judging from his concert hall appearances, for he possesses subtle qualities as a colorist and has a unique pedal treatment that not even modern recording can fully capture.

—H. C. S.

### Voice

**BIZET:** *Carmen—Chanson du Toréador* (with chorus); and **MASSENET:** *Hero-diade—Vision fugitive*; sung by Nelson Eddy with Orchestra conducted by Robert Ambruster. Columbia disc 70349-D, price \$1.00.

▲ Eddy has neither the bravura for the Toréador song nor the requisite sensuousness for Herod's aria. Stylistically he does a better job on the Massenet aria than on the Bizet, where curiously he gives an impression in the second verse of being momentarily uncertain. Further, he sings under the true pitch once or twice. The performances here are reminiscent of the type usually heard on radio programs; Ambruster is, of course, the conductor of the Chase and Sanborn program on which Eddy formerly was the singer. The recording is quite satisfactory.

—P. G.

**Danny Boy** (*Londonderry Air*, adapted by F. E. Weatherby); and **Annie Laurie** (arr. Liza Lehmann); sung by Marjorie Lawrence, with Felix Wolfes at the piano. Victor disc 17457, price \$1.00.

▲ *Danny Boy* is a song that the late Schumann-Heink helped popularize as much as anyone else; and anyone who has heard her sing it will agree with us that the feeling she brought to it was not sought for; in fact the simplicity of her style in a song of this kind was admirable. The air, upon which Weatherby's text is imposed, is an old one, and as a song it is perhaps more widely known in the Katherine Tynan Hinkson text, *Would God I Were the Tender Apple Blossom*. Both poems are rather heavily laden with sentiment, but it seems to us that that of Weatherby is more

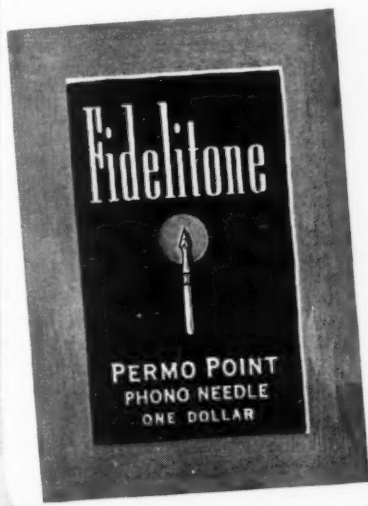
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particularly so. It is a definite product of the Victorian ballad days; for Weatherby wrote words to innumerable English ballads during the late nineties and the early years of the present century.

Miss Lawrence is far too earnest in both these songs, which, springing as they do from the folk song genre, hardly ask anything more than simple sincerity and good singing from any artist. In both these selections the Australian soprano stresses the sentiment unduly. Vocally the lady is at her best, and there is much here to admire in her use of the dark mezzo-soprano quality of her lower and middle voice. A line in the sponsor's notes seems to us rather appropriate: "Both these pieces are very well known although Miss Lawrence's style is her own." The recording is excellent from every angle.—P. G.

DUNHILL: *The Cloths of Heaven*; and HARTY: *Cradle Song*; sung by John McCormack, with Edwin Schneider at the piano. Victor 10-inch disc 26705, price 50c.

▲ The poem of the first song is by Yeats and that of the second by Colum. Both Dunhill and Harty have made settings of expressive simplicity, and McCormack sings these songs with admirably restrained artistry. Both songs are of Irish origin and the singer's slight intimation of the Irish brogue is appropriate; his every word is distinguishable. This is not a new record, but one McCormack made a number of years ago when his voice was in far better condition than it is today. Of the two songs I think I like the Harty better. However, both are worth knowing and all listeners who admire lieder recordings should make it a point to hear this disc. The recording is satisfactory.—P. H. R.

GILBERT and SULLIVAN: *Iolanthe* (abridged version); presented by the Columbia Light Opera Company, conducted by Joseph Batten. Columbia set M-422, six 10-inch discs, price \$5.00.

▲ Sometimes the recording companies do things in a somewhat half-hearted fashion. We were prepared for an abridged version of *Iolanthe*, but we did not expect to be whizzed through the operetta so fast that only a nostalgic blur remained. It is not that the work itself is so badly cut—most

of the highlights are present; but the way they are presented will give the uninitiated only a vague idea of one of Gilbert and Sullivan's most melodious and satiric scores.

The most important cuts are as follows: the overture, most of the orchestral introductions and interludes, the opening chorus of fairies, the entrance of Strephon, the Queen's solo, a section of the peers' song, the Lord Chancellor's opening solo, the trio (No. 8 in the Chappell vocal score), part of Lord Tolloller's song and the departure of the peers, much of the finale to Act I, the famous trio in the second act (although the thematic material reappears in the closing chorus), and Iolanthe's recitative and ballad. Now, with the exception of the *Highly Susceptible Chancellor* song, which should have been included, many of these cuts were to be expected in an abridged version. What bothers us much more is the fact that in the solos and choruses only one or, at most, two verses are sung, which prevents any understanding of the context unless one is perfectly familiar with the libretto. Furthermore, fully half the joy in Savoy opera is derived from the lyrics; we would much rather have had some additional cuts than the mutilation of each song.

The singers in the present set are George Portland (baritone) as the Lord Chancellor, Appleton Moore (bass) and Dan Jones (tenor) as Mountarat and Tolloller, Randall Jackson (baritone) as Private Willis, Barrington Hooper (baritone) as Strephon, Nellie Walker (contralto) as the Fairy Queen, Sophie Rowlands (soprano) as Iolanthe, Alice Lilley (soprano) as Phyllis, Joan Cross (soprano) as Celia, and Catherine Stewart (soprano) as Lelia.

On the whole the performance is a routine affair. The singing is not as good as in the recent *Royale Trial by Jury* and the chorus is at times heavy and spiritless. We feel that the complete D'Oyly Carte version, which is more expensive, is better worth the additional cost. —H. C. S.

HANDEL: *Semele* — *Where'er You Walk*; and *Theodora* — *Defend Her! Heaven*; sung by Lawrence Tibbett with Stewart Wille at the piano. Victor disc 17456, price \$1.00.

▲ This is some of the most smoothly

contrived singing that Tibbett has given us on records. The sponsors inform us that there has been a constant demand from the baritone's admirers for some years now for a recording by him of *Where'er You Walk*. Stylistically Tibbett does a fine job with both arias; but of the two I prefer his more widely contrasted singing of an unrecorded air from *Theodora*. *Theodora* was an oratorio written to an English text in 1750. Its most widely known and sung air would seem to be that for soprano, *Angels Bright and Fair*. The angels played quite a prominent part in the text of *Theodora* as the listener will note in the baritone selection, *Defend Her! Heaven*. Tibbett's diction is so wholly admirable that the text of this aria does not have to be given here. *Defend Her! Heaven* is written somewhat in the florid manner, with long lines which require good breath control; and these Tibbett encompasses with rare ease.

*Where'er You Walk* has been recorded quite a number of times. Personally, I prefer the air sung by the tenor voice; and of all those recordings which I have

heard that of John McCormack approximates the best Handelian traditions. Yet the McCormack disc, made in his fifty-third year, leaves something to be desired from a vocal standpoint. Webster Booth, the young English tenor, has also made a commendable recording. Certainly, when all is said and done, admirers of Tibbett will not be disappointed in his singing here; it is some of the best, as we have said, that he has given us on records. Not the least of the baritone's attributes in these selections is his restraint. Mr. Wille gives the singer fine support, and the recording offers a good balance between the voice and piano.

—P. H. R.

#### SONGS FROM SHAKESPEARE'S

PLAYS; performed by Marie Houston, soprano, Frank La Forge, harpsichord and piano, and Justus Gelfius, flute. Victor set P-39, six 10-inch discs, price \$3.50.

▲ In some respects, this album is similar to the Columbia set that was issued last April, in which Mordecai Bauman sang songs that were composed to lyrics by Shakespeare. The present set goes further

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afield, including songs by 19th and 20th century composers. Presented therein are the anonymous *Willow Song* (from *Othello*, IV, 3) and airs sung by Ophelia (*Hamlet*, IV, 3) (disc 26706), Jones' *Farewell, Dear Love*, Arne's *Where the Bee Sucks* (*Tempest*, V, 1) and *When Daisies Pied* (*Love's Labour's Lost*, V, 2) (disc 26707), Haydn's *She Never Told Her Love* (*Twelfth Night*, II, 4) and Clifton's *If Music Be the Food of Love* (*Twelfth Night*, I, 1) (disc 26708), Cook's *Over Hill, Over Dale* (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, II, 1) and Bishop's *Lo, Hear the Gentle Lark* (*Venus and Adonis*) (disc 26709), Busch's *Orpheus with His Lute* (*Henry VIII*, III, 1)—and not written by Shakespeare, according to recent scholars, but by Fletcher), Schubert's *Hark, Hark! The Lark* (*Cymbeline*, II, 3) and Greenhill's *Lawn as White as Driven Snow* (*Winter's Tale*, IV, 4) (disc 26710), Eric Coates' *Tell Me Where Is Fancy Bred* (*Merchant of Venice*, III, 2), and La Forge's *Take, O Take Those Lips Away* (*Measure for Measure*, IV, 1) and *Come Unto These Yellow Sands* (*Tempest*, I, 2) (disc 26711).

Most of the interest in the album will center around the earlier songs. I know of no previous recording of the group of songs that Ophelia sings, while the *Willow Song* is one of the most beautiful melodies surviving from the Elizabethan age. Unfortunately the version presented here is hardly authentic; the melodies probably were obtained from Naylor's book *Shakespeare and Music* and have been harmonized with a particularly un-Elizabethan harpsichord accompaniment.

It is not my intention to dash into Shakespearean scholarship, but the Robert Jones song that Miss Houston sings has nothing to do with *Twelfth Night*. The lyric antedates the play, having appeared in a miscellany with the delicious title of *Golden Garland of Princely Delights*. Shakespeare makes Sir Toby misquote and only recite snatches—four lines, I believe. The song that Jones composed (which was published in 1600, not 1601, as the notes say) is based on the poem that appeared in the miscellany, not on Sir Toby's intoxicated burst into vocalism. Thus the song is Elizabethan, but not Shakespearean. But *When Daisies Pied* most certainly is Shakespearean, although this fact could

scarcely be guessed from the Bowdlerized version the singer uses. The original version can be found in the *Columbia Album of Shakespearean Song*.

There is little of interest in the rest of the set. The Hadyn song is not typical of the composer, the Clifton and Greenhill songs are typical of the worst in English music, and the remainder do little justice to the beauty of the lyrics (with the exception of course, of the Schubert masterpiece). Miss Houston's vocal deficiencies are generally balanced by good musicianship. Her performance is conscientious, and the recording is good, but that is about the best that can be said for the set.

—H. C. S.

STRAUSS: *Cäcilie*, Op. 27, No. 2, and *Heimkehr*, Op. 15, No. 5; sung by Suzanne Sten (mezzo-soprano) with Leo Taubman at the piano. Columbia 10-inch disc 17231-D, price 75c.

▲ Suzanne Sten is a gifted lieder singer, with a fine voice which she uses expressively and intelligently. Her first disc offers an unrecorded song and one that has been recorded no less than a half-dozen times.

*Cäcilie* is essentially a man's song, and, as Mr. Miller has said, it is preferable when sung by a man's voice. Both Flagstad and Melchior have made recordings of this song recently, but neither is among the singer's best efforts. The German tenor Patzak has made the best version. *Cäcilie* is one of Strauss' rhapsodic songs, aiming to create a mood of elation and spontaneity; but I have never felt that the song was constructed with sufficient linear freedom to allow for true spontaneity. Sten sings it well, but with hardly as much fervor as it deserves.

*Heimkehr* is a song of sentiment, requiring, like the composer's more familiar *Morgen*, smooth, sustained singing. "Breezes softly are sighing, my heart turns home to thee . . . Enough of day with its brightness, when life is wild and gay . . . Now that the sun is low, and the meadows have grown silent, there is the promise of peace and calm with thee." Miss Sten sings this difficult song expressively, with warmth and richness of tone. The singer's accompanist seems to me somewhat less than satisfactory.

The recording is good. —P. H. R.



WAGNER: *Das Rheingold* — *Weiche, Wotan, weiche!*, and *Die Walküre* — 1. *So ist es denn aus mit den Ewigen*, 2. *Deiner ew'ge Gattin heilige* (disc 17221); *Die Götterdämmerung* — *Waltrautes Erzählung* (disc 17222); *Parsifal* — *Ich sab' das Kind*, and *Tristan und Isolde* — *Brangäne's Warnung*; sung by Kerstin Thorborg, with Victor Symphony Orchestra, directed by Dr. Karl Riedel. Victor set M-707, price \$3.50.

▲ The Swedish contralto, Kerstin Thorborg, a noted Wagnerian singer, has been one of the most valuable members of the Metropolitan Opera since the season of 1936-37. Victor calls this set *Wagnerian Characterizations*, an appropriate title since the singer here gives us her impersonation of five of Wagner's leading contralto characters.

Miss Thorborg is blessed with a rich, warm voice, which on the whole she employs with artistic assurance. Sometimes, however, as in the passages of Fricka, drawn from the 2nd act of *Wälküre*, and

in Kundry's *Ich sab' das Kind* from the 2nd act of *Parsifal*, her dramatic intensity interrupts, upon occasion, the smoothness of her vocal line. Almost every opera-goer has his memories of great singers in these parts, and almost every record buyer undoubtedly has his favorite recording of some, if not all, of these scenes. Schumann-Heink, Leisner, and Branzell have all made recordings of the Erda aria from *Rheingold*. The Leisner and Branzell versions are vocally most impressive, that of Schumann-Heink, made in her late years, less so. Thorborg is given more realistic recording, of which more anon, and she too contributes a splendid recording of this scene. There exists only one other recording of the Fricka music from *Wälküre*: the complete scene on two discs by Emmi Leisner and Friedrich Schorr. Leisner is far less convincing as Fricka than is Thorborg, who brings not only a voice more suited to the part but greater dramatic assurance. The two parts of the scene which Thorborg has chosen to record, are Fricka's storm of indignation against Wotan's proposal to bless the union of Sieglinde

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"By far the most important of the American periodicals from the point of view of musical scholarship is the *Musical Quarterly*. It is a serious review, cosmopolitan in character, and has published valuable contributions from most of the leading writers of music in Europe and America." — *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*

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and Siegmund, and the passage where Fricka demands his oath that Siegmund die.

The scene in *Götterdämmerung* where Waltraute visits Brünnhilde and tells her of Wotan's anguish has been recorded in its entirety in Victor set M-60, with Austral, as Brünnhilde, and the Dutch contralto Maartje Offers, as Waltraute. The narrative alone has also been recorded by the Viennese contralto Rosette Anday, and in part only by Schumann-Heink. Anday in the days that she made her recording was a most imposing artist; but Schumann-Heink was, alas, beyond her prime. Offers possesses a genuinely beautiful voice (as those who own her recordings from the *St. Matthew Passion* well know), but as Waltraute she lacks the essential vocal amplitude, with which Thorborg is more fully blessed. Of the three discs in this set, this one seems to us the most memorable.

Although Wagner wrote the part of Kundry with a mezzo-soprano in mind, the role is more generally essayed by sopranos. And those who have heard singers like Fremstad and Leider in this role will not soon forget them. Kundry in recent years has also come to be one of Flagstad's best roles. The so-called *Herzeleid Scene*, which Thorborg sings here, has always seemed to us an ungrateful one; it is hardly Wagner at his best. However, Thorborg sings this music expressively, despite the fact that some of the higher passages are not encompassed with absolute ease. Frida Leider's performance is more smoothly contrived.

There is something curiously unsatisfactory in Thorborg's performance of *Brangänes Warnung* here. This scene is closely integrated with the *Love Duet*, and has such an important psychological effect in the manner in which it is done on the stage that to have the voice of Brangäne suddenly dominating the scene in the forefront of the orchestra is to remove some of its dramatic import and significance. The singer gives us a magnificently voiced performance here, but the effect is no longer *Brangänes Warnung*. Further the singer seems far too close to the microphone for her own good, and the results on a true higher-fidelity machine may not be wholly satisfactory.

This brings us to the recording. From a standpoint of realism it is admirably contrived, but there are evidences that the singer's position in front of the mike was not always to her best advantage, for we find an unwarranted hardness in her high tones upon occasion. Perhaps a little less amplitude would have helped. However, most people can solve such problems with the aid of the controls on modern phonographs. The orchestral background here is excellently accomplished. —P. H. R.

WAGNER: *Lobengrin—Elsas Traum*; and SCHUBERT: *Aufenthalt*; sung by Helen Traubel, with Victor Symphony Orchestra directed by Bruno Reibold. Victor disc 16345, price \$1.00.

STRAUSS: *Ruhe, meine Seele*, Op. 27, No. 2; and SCHUBERT: *Wiegenlied*, Op. 105, No. 2; sung by Helen Traubel with Conrad V. Bos at the piano. Victor disc 17480, price \$1.00.

▲ It is strange to find as gifted a singer as Miss Traubel so completely unimpressive in one of these discs and so convincing in the other. Her rendition of *Elsa's Dream* is disappointing; she does not bring to her interpretation the detachment and repose which the aria demands. Hers is a rather worldly Elsa; as least she conveys that impression here. Perhaps the poor orchestral accompaniment prevented a satisfactory rendition of the scene, for certainly the conductor gives a pedestrian performance. Again in the Schubert song, the conductor lends the singer inadequate support. And anyway the orchestral accompaniment in this song is, in our estimation, wholly undesirable.

The strongly impassioned melody of *Aufenthalt* is, as one writer has said, "supported by an accompaniment which literally throbs with suppressed excitement". Had Miss Traubel been given the type of accompaniment she obtains from Mr. Bos in the Strauss song, one feels her rendition of this composition would have been more satisfactory. Whether one believes *Aufenthalt* to be a man or woman's song is not of much importance. It belongs to the *Schwanengesang* cycle, which was strung together by one of Schubert's publishers, and which is usually associated in its entirety with the baritone voice. This par-

ticular song, however, is not infrequently sung by women. Both Marian Anderson and Maria Olszewska have made records of it, but this is the first recording by a soprano. We like the Kipnis version, although it is not one of his most distinguished lieder discs, and Miss Anderson's rendition is also effectively contrived. Miss Traubel does not bring sufficient contrast to her performance; finally, when sung by a soprano, the song seems to have more of opera in it than of the lied.

The other record is a tribute to the singer's artistry. Her renditions of Strauss' *Rube, meine Seele* and of the less familiar Schubert *Cradle Song* are memorable. The intensity and nobility of the soprano's voice are well evidenced in the Strauss song, and despite the fact that she drives some of the tones rather hard, one is truly impressed with her feeling for and projection of this composition. In these troubled times the text of this song acquires a new significance. "No wind is stirring, hill and vale are wrapt in sleep . . . Rest, rest, my soul, thou hast suffered, labored, toiled. Thou hast fought and trembled like the wild ocean . . . These times are momentous, head and heart must struggle sore. Rest, rest, my soul, and forget. All thy sufferings will be ov'r." In this, one of Strauss' most effective songs, the singer fully conveys its dramatic import, and also achieves some fine tonal nuances.

The Schubert *Wiegenlied*, "How kindly Heaven closes the little eyes in slumber", not to be confused with the more widely sung "*Schlafe, schlafe, holder süsser Kind*", introduces a new side of the singer's art; for here the requisite tenderness, the repose, missing in *Elsa's Dream*, are admirably portrayed.

The accompaniments of Conrad V. Bos are all that any singer could wish for; and the recording is excellent, with a fine balance between the singer and the keyboard.

—P. H. R.

### Other Recordings

SMETANA, arr. Petras: *The Bartered Bride—Fantasia*; played by the Victor Symphony Orchestra. Victor disc 36348, price 75c.

ORTH-BACH: *In a Clock Store*; and MICHAELIS: *The Forge in the Forest*; played by the Band of H.M. Coldstream

Guards, conducted by Capt. J. Causley Windram. Victor disc 26715, 50c.

▲ Here we have three first rate recordings of popular, familiar music. Smetana's *Bartered Bride* is a tuneful and joyous score and those who like pot-pourris will find this one worthwhile. The Band of His Majesty's Coldstream Guards is one of England's most famous; the selections here are too well known to require comment.

EDDY DUCHIN PIANO SOLOS. Columbia set C-32, four 10-inch discs, \$2.50.

▲ The answer to a frequently-voiced demand of many years' standing—piano solos by Duchin. Rather spineless, wishy-washy rhythms but good tone. No attempt at elaborate arrangements. Straight playing in a highly sentimental style that his fans will go for in a big way.

VERNON DUKE SONGS; sung by Hildegard. Decca Album 149, three 10-inch discs, price \$2.75.

▲ Hildegard devotees will love these. Such things as *April In Paris* are exactly suited to her style and the two-piano arrangements for the accompaniments by Duke himself are pretty swell.

MEXICAN AND CUBAN SONGS; sung by Elvira Rios. Decca Album 143, four 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Looks like this Mexican girl might be the next sensation among the N. Y. night club artists. She gets an unbelievable amount of juice out of these familiar Latin numbers, and is a sort of Latin-American Lucienne Boyer.

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# Swing Music Notes

Enzo Archetti

▲ By far the most interesting and exciting news of the moment concerns the much talked of reissues planned by Columbia. Notice of Columbia's intentions has appeared in this column but now the plan has become a reality and the first of the reissues are available. All of them are jazz classics by common consent of jazz connoisseurs. All of them are rare in their original form. Some of them have never been publicly available and were therefore almost legendary. At any rate the first thirty-one discs of this new jazz classic catalog are now on hand and more are promised. They will be drawn from the rich sources of old Columbia, Okeh, Brunswick, Vocalion, Harmony, Melotone, Perfect, and other catalogs, the rights of which are now owned by the present Columbia company. A special vote of thanks is due John Hammond, the jazz specialist associated with Columbia, for it was originally his plan and his is the energy and enthusiasm which has made it a reality.

In the first group of reissues there are four albums of four records each: devoted respectively to Louis Armstrong, Bix Beiderbecke, Fletcher Henderson, and Bessie Smith. All of the Armstrong sides except two are by his Hot Five and Hot Seven groups, and among them is included the very rare *Heebie Jeebies* (originally Okeh 8300). Two Hot Seven sides, *S.O.L. Blues* and *Twelfth St. Rag* were never previously released. The Fives and Sevens personnel included the Dodds brothers and Kid Ory and it is generally agreed that Louis Armstrong never made better jazz before or after.

The Beiderbeckes include *Royal Garden Blues*, *Goose Pimples*, *Tbou Swell*, *Louisiana*, *Op Man River*, *Wa Da Da*, *For No Reason At All in C*, and *Sweet Sue*. The last named is a dubbing from a twelve-inch Paul Whiteman record with the introduction omitted.

The Fletcher Hendersons include the

marvelous *Sugar Foot Stomp* and *Money Blues*. Also included is *Hop Off* but not the version on Brunswick 4119. It is a new recording never before released. *Can You Take It* is from a different master.

The Bessie Smiths are some of her best, with *Cake Walkin' Babies*, a previously unreleased number, thrown in for good measure. *Empty Bed Blues* and *Young Woman's Blues* are included. None of the discs duplicates anything in the Bessie Smith Memorial Album which Columbia also issued a few years ago.

The remaining records are singles among which are included *Chocolate Dandies*, *Henry Allens*, *Johnny Dodds*, *Don Redmans*, *Luis Russells*, and *Duke Ellingtons*. To this writer the latter are most exciting. *Big House Blues* and *Rocky Mountain Blues* were originally Okeh 8836. *Ducky Wucky* and *Swing Low* is not the same as on Brunswick 6432 but two different recordings, never previously pressed.

These records should not be missed by any one who is seriously interested in jazz at its very best. In the opinion of the jazz world as a whole, they are all tops. These records will form the nucleus of a perfect jazz library. Columbia is to be congratulated for its enterprise and it deserves the support of all so that it may continue to enlarge its "Jazz Classic" catalog.

A strange problem arises out of this Columbia Reissue plan. Some of the discs scheduled for reissue have already been issued under the U.H.C.A. and H.R.S. private labels by consent of the Columbia Company. How will this be adjusted to the best interests of all?

Another complication is the recent move by Decca. They have acquired rights to a part of the English Parlophone catalog and their first reissue from it is Coleman Hawkins' *Jamaica Shout*, recorded for Parlophone in November 1933 and issued here as Okeh 41566. Later this same record appeared under the U.H.C.A. label as Number 56. Now Decca issues it as Decca 3358. One wonders who really owns this record. And just where does the U.H.C.A. fit in?

The 1940 Edition of *Hot Discography*, which should have appeared a month ago, was delayed because of difficulties in checking the vast amount of material planned for

inclusion. A preview of the proofs indicates that this new edition will be more complete, more accurate, and more extensive than any reference book on jazz attempted up to now. It is destined to become the jazz bible. The new release date was set for October 25th.

News has just been received from France that Charles Delauney, the compiler of the first *Hot Discography*, is well and safe in the unoccupied section of France. He saw action in the French army and has been awarded the Croix de Guerre for his services during the invasion.

Huges Panassié also has been heard from. He, too, is safe and well. He reports that jazz in France is at a standstill and that swing records were made all during the war up to the time of the invasion. However, he says nothing of the fate of those valuable masters or whether there will be any more releases.

Benny Goodman is not yet well enough to resume band work. However, the business of assembling his new band is proceeding just the same. Dave Tough and Artie Bernstein are already definitely set to join and there is some talk that Teddy Wilson will also join. For the present, however, Teddy continues with his own outfit at the new uptown Café Society. In the meantime, Benny will not be idle, for he is scheduled to appear publicly in a new role. On December 12th he will make his first appearance as soloist with a symphony orchestra—the New York Philharmonic—to play the Mozart *Clarinet Concerto* and the Debussy *Rhapsody for Clarinet and Orchestra*.

This will not be Benny's first encounter with "serious" music. He has played such music at Town Hall and has recorded Mozart's *Quintet for Clarinet and Strings*, K. 581. And it can honestly be said, that for one who has grown up in an atmosphere of jazz, his attainments are by no means insignificant. He is developing a feeling and an understanding for this type of music. His technique is already known to be more than adequate and his interest is also known to be genuine. He has this column's best wishes for success on his first appearance with the Philharmonic. It is being looked forward to with real interest.

## In the Popular Vein

Horace Van Norman

AAAA—*Special Delivery*, and *Keepin' Myself For You*. Artie Shaw and His Gramercy Five. Victor 26762.

● This disk marks the first appearance on records of a new small unit out of the current Artie Shaw combination. It consists, besides Artie himself on clarinet, of trumpet, guitar, string bass, drums, and harpsichord, the latter being handled with considerable dexterity by John Guarnieri, pianist of the band. *Special Delivery* is a furiously-paced original by Shaw, and while it has but little purely musical value in itself, it serves admirably to demonstrate the technical prowess of Mr. Shaw and his fellow workers. It seems possible that Shaw is taking a leaf out of Alec Wilder's book by his use of the harpsichord in a small group like this, but there is little similarity in the treatment of the instrument. In the case of Wilder, the harpsichord is handled idiomatically; in the case of Shaw, the distinctive color of the instrument is not properly exploited, so that the effect is more nearly that of a guitar. It is all highly interesting, however, from an experimental standpoint, and creates a desire to hear more discs from the same source. Billy Butterfield's excellent trumpet work here is worthy of commendation.

AAAA—*Harlem Nocturne*, and *From Oakland to Burbank*. Ray Noble and his Orchestra. Columbia 35708.

● It is a splendid band which Noble has built up for himself out on the coast, and almost anything that he turns out these days is worthy of a hearing. First, last, and always the musician, Noble invariably imparts to his discs a technical finish, quite regardless of the merit of the tune which he has been assigned to record. *From Oakland to Burbank* is a Noble original of rather moderate interest. It is all very competently handled but the net result is not particularly exciting. *Harlem Nocturne*, however, which is written by someone named Hagan, is a very delightful atmospheric bit which features some elegant alto sax work by Jack Dumont, of the band. Mr. Dumont creates the loveliest tone imaginable on his instrument and plays the rather haunting theme with rare expressiveness and musicianship. The whole thing is exquisitely managed and a really first-rate recording is the result.

AAAA—*Down the Road a Piece*, by The Bradley Trio, and *Celery Stalks At Midnight*, by Will Bradley and his Orchestra. Columbia 35707.

● The popularity of Will Bradley and his recently formed band has been zooming at a terrific rate owing principally to the really magnificent contributions he has made in the boogie-woogie field. With *Rhumboogie*, *Beat Me Daddy* and a whole string of other striking recordings in a similar vein, he has managed to do what precious few bands are



able to do in so short a time—establish himself in the mind of the public as the exponent par excellence of a highly distinctive style of playing. While a major share of the credit for all this belongs rightly to the writers of the material which Bradley has used to achieve this success (Messrs. Raye and Prince seem to be responsible for most of them), Bradley deserves a world of credit for spotting this trend while it was still in the embryonic stage and making the most of it. *Down the Road a Piece* is as slick a job of modified boogie woogie as you'll ever want to hear. The trio consists of Ray McKinley (drums), Doc Goldberg (bass) and Freddie Slack (piano). There is quite a bit of dialogue in here that isn't very nice, providing you're able to understand what they're saying (which isn't easy), but musically it's about as cute as it could be. The most distinctive part is a passage for string bass and celesta which you won't be forgetting. And Slack's piano work throughout is grand. The most original thing about the reverse is the title.

AAA—I Want to Live As Long As You Love Me, and Such Stuff As Dreams Are Made Of. Leo Reisman and his Orchestra. Victor 26758.

● There are about ten first-rate writers of show music in America today, but I am sorry to say that Sammy Fain is not one of them. A good routine tunesmith without anything remotely resembling a style of his own, he makes rather frequent appearances on Broadway these days, the most recent being his score for the current Ed Wynn vehicle, *Boys and Girls Together*. Such stuff as dreams are made of, from the score, sounds as though Fain might be trying to write like Cole Porter. As a result, the music has a certain warmed-over, synthetic quality which is anything but appealing. *I Want to Live* is better, being the nearest thing to a song hit that the show possesses. Reisman, with his usual tasteful treatment, makes it sound even better than it is.

AAA—There'll Always Be An England, and Wings Over the Navy. British Fusiliers Military Band. Columbia 35742.

● *There'll Always Be An England* is the only outstanding popular song produced by the war to date. It is said to be sweeping England, Canada and the rest of the Empire, and there is no denying its stirring qualities. With highly pertinent lyrics and a tune that gets under your skin after a hearing or two, it seems to be the *It's a Long Way to Tipperary* of World War No. 2, except that it is much less of a marching song and much more of a hymn than was *Tipperary*. The recording here is highly satisfactory, and the vocal is tellingly projected by Emile Renan. The reverse, which is running a close second in popularity, turns out to have been written by (of all people) Harry Warren. There must be an interesting story behind this song, and I should like to know what it is.

AAA—Dancing On a Dime, and I Hear Music. Larry Clinton and his Orchestra. Victor 26766.

● Both numbers here are from the forthcoming film, *Dancing On a Dime*, and are the work of that

always interesting writer, Burton Lane. *I Hear Music* is attractive, and Clinton starts out promisingly enough with a particularly intriguing vocal by Peggy Mann, but on the last chorus he rather lets things go to pot by a lot of aimless noodling from soprano and tenor saxes. This sort of thing, if it were well done, might fit an out-and-out hot arrangement but never belongs to a straight commercial recording such as this is (or should be).

AAA—Five O'Clock Whistle, and There Shall Be No Night. Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. Victor 26748.

● This is about as near to being an undistinguished recording as you'll ever find emanating from Ellington. Two commercial tunes of little or no merit, they are completely unworthy of the Duke's prodigious talents and it would be a waste of space to mention the disc here at all were it not for the really magnificent vocal on *Five O'Clock Whistle* by Ivy Anderson, Duke's ever-reliable and sadly under-rated vocalist. With the Duke doing mostly originals these days, opportunities for hearing Miss Anderson on discs are not as frequent as they should be, and this record serves to remind us of what a fine artist she is.

#### OTHER CURRENT RECORDINGS

AAA—The World Is Mad (Parts I and II). Count Basie and his Orchestra. Okeh 5816.

AAA—Shadows On the Sand, and Five O'Clock Whistle. Glenn Miller and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10900.

AAA—Rhuboogie, and A Million Dreams Ago. Woody Herman and his Orchestra. Decca 3396.

AAA—My Mommie Sent Me To the Store, and Dry Bones. "Fats" Waller and his Rhythm. Bluebird B-10892.

AAA—Blues Petite, and Andiology. John Kirby and his Orchestra. Okeh 5805.

AAA—Swing Me Bach, and In a Shanty In Old Shanty Town. Johnny Long and his Orchestra. Decca 3409.

AAA—Practice Makes Perfect, and The Same Old Story. Billy Holliday. Okeh 5806.

AA—Ferry-Boat Serenade, and The Same Old Story. Frankie Masters and his Orchestra. Okeh 5716.

AA—The Yankee Doodle Polka, and The Swiss Bellringer. Lou Holden and his Disciples of Rhythm. Decca 3408.

AA—Are You Hef To the Jive? and Sunset. Cab Calloway and his Orchestra. Okeh 5804.

AA—Jimmie Meets the Count, and Blue Sonata. Sonny Burke and his Orchestra. Okeh 5813.

AA—After Hours, and Song of the Wanderer. Erskine Hawkins and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10879.

AA—Don't Call Me Boy, and You're Bound To Look Like a Monkey When You Grow Old. Bob Crosby's Bob Cats. Decca 3431.

AA—The World Without You, and Peekin' At The Deacon. Will Hudson and his Orchestra. Decca 3429.



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